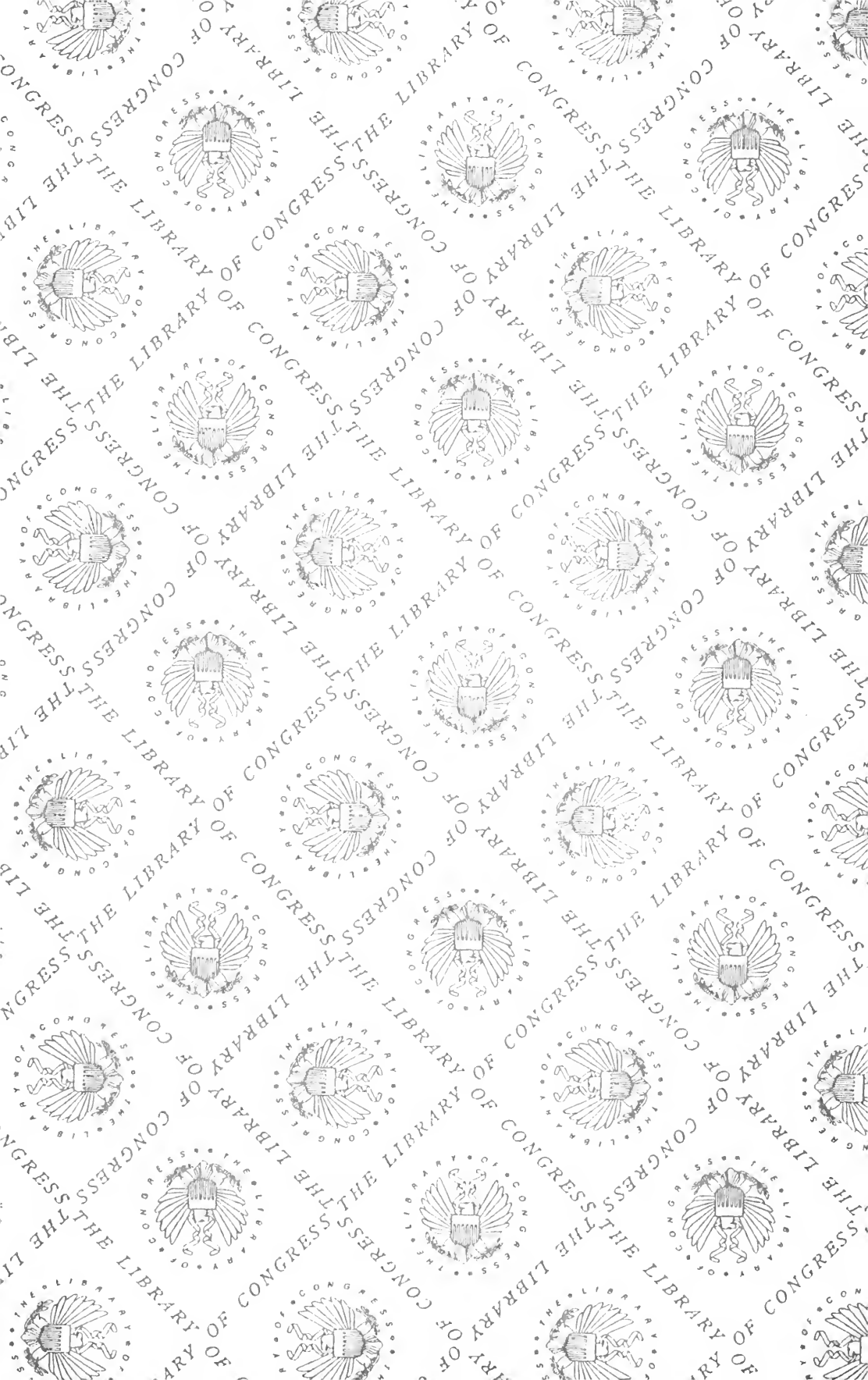
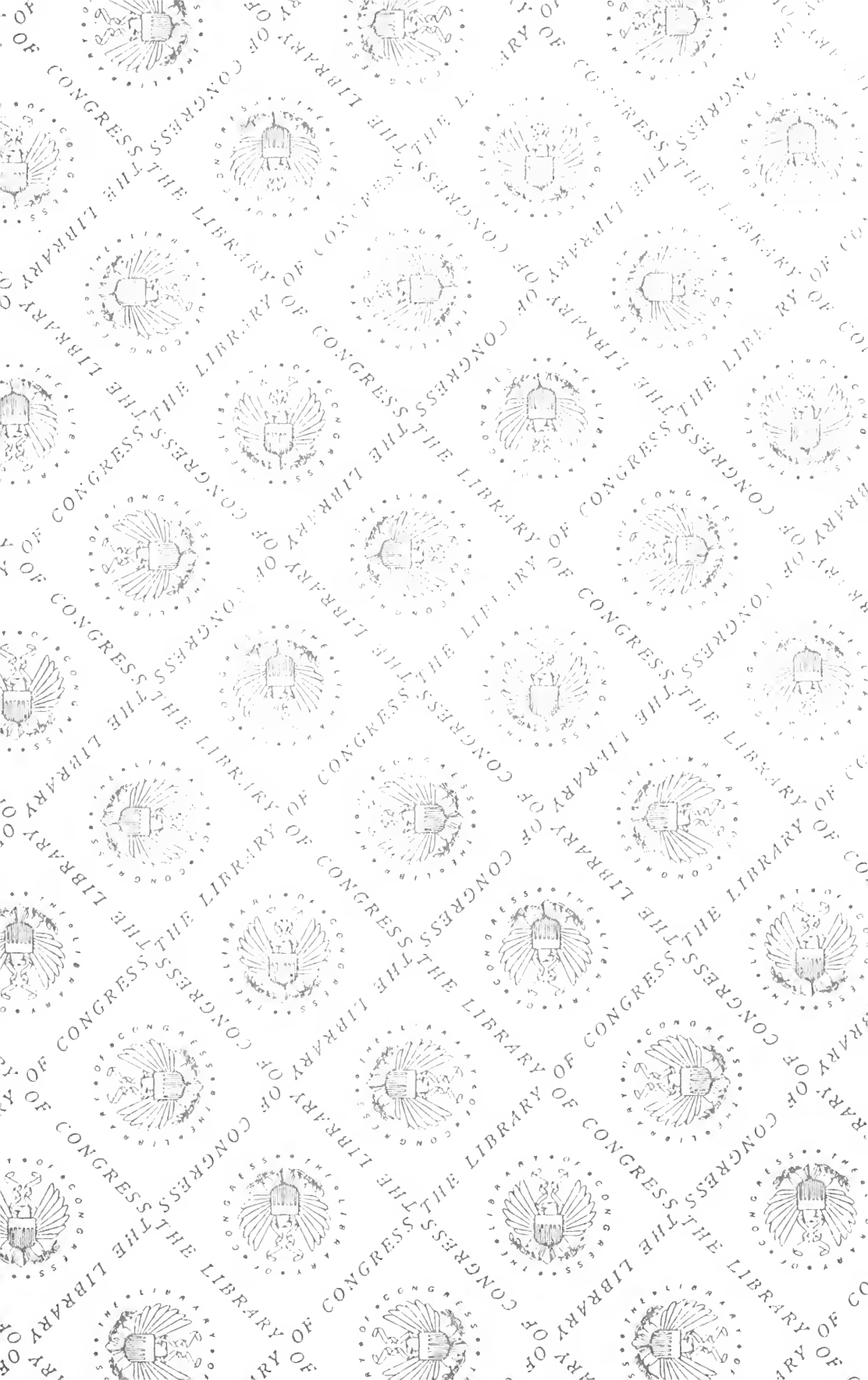


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1915





HER OWN MONEY.

A COMEDY IN THREE ACTS

BY
MARK SWAN

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HER OWN MONEY.

CHARACTERS.

LEWIS ALDEN.....*A business man*
MARY ALDEN.....*His wife*
MILDRED CARR.....*MARY's sister*
TOMMY HAZLETON.....*In love with MILDRED*
HARVEY BEECHER.....*A neighbor*
CLARA BEECHER.....*His wife*
RHODA.....*A maid*

HER OWN MONEY.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES.

ACT I. Living room in Lewis Alden's home. An evening in summer.

ACT II. In the same room. Evening after dinner.

SCENE II—ACT II. The same room. An hour later.

The curtain will be lowered ten seconds to denote the passage of several hours.

ACT III. A cottage on Long Island. The next year.

OCT 15 1915

HER OWN MONEY.

ACT I.

The First Act occurs in an apartment on the third floor of a New York Apartment House. It is a comfortable, homelike, living-room—neither elaborate, nor shabby; part of a home occupied by people of moderate means, and good taste.

On the left is a mantel—beneath it a fireplace. As it is summer this is banked with plants. On the left above, is a window, set obliquely, which opens on a rather dim court. A large arch at the center is very lightly draped. On the right in the corner, is an arch running straight across leading to a hall-way—which runs straight back up stage. On the right below this is a large arch leading to a dining-room—and on through the apartment.

In front of the fireplace is a couch running up and down stage. Beside it is a stand. On the right of the stand is a chair. Next the window is a lady's desk and chair. On the right, against the wall, is a good sized table covered with books and magazines; chairs about it; a large arm-chair down right. Through the arch into the dining-room is seen a sideboard. In the room at back—seen through large arch, is a piano, a music cabinet, a bookcase; a table in the center; and several chairs. This room also has a door connecting with the hall-way. At the up-stage end of the hall-way is a door giving access to the public hall-way. There is also a door about R. 3 E. leading from the hall-way to Lew's den. Mary's desk sits by the window up stage. The window of the Beecher apartment can be seen at back, through the window up left.

ON SCENE.—Plants at mantel. Lights up. Sewing basket on machine, scissors, hat-rack.

ON DESK.—Pen, ink, check book—vase.

ON TABLE R.—Bills—account book, pencil, gas bill.

Books and papers on L. table. Matches on mantel. Shade up. Window up. Handbag on desk. 2 Bankbooks in drawer of desk. 6 Stamps.

OFF R.—I Calender. Dress box tied. Money.
(3 bills.)

OFF R. C.—Elevator effect. Door bell. Piano.
Violets.

HER OWN MONEY.

ACT I.

SCENE:—*At rise, MARY ALDEN is discovered at table right. She is an attractive, pleasant, well dressed woman of thirty, with rather a thoughtful face. She is checking up bills, of various sizes and colors, comparing them with the accounts in her house-book. She notes the total amounts on a sheet of paper, shakes her head and sighs.*

MARY. (*Calls off right*) Rhoda, Rhoda.

(*After a moment, RHODA comes from right, wiping her hands on her apron. She is a tall quadroon woman of fifty, dressed very plainly, but very neatly. Wears a gingham apron, and also glasses. Is evidently a general servant.*)

RHODA. What is it, Mrs. Alden?

MARY. There's something wrong about this butcher's bill. My house book (*She holds up book*) makes the account thirty-two dollars. The bill is for thirty-two fifty.

RHODA. No'me, de bill is all right. I done checked it up with my account.

MARY. Your account. But you can't read.

RHODA. No'me. I can't read written writin', but I been keepin' account jess de same. I'll show you. (*She turns and goes out right. MARY again inspects*

the bills. RHODA *re-enters right carrying a large calendar*) Dis heah, is de calendar yo' all gimme an' every day I puts down de meat we has, an' how much it cost. Dis was Monday. (*She points to space in calendar*) We had beef. So I drewed a picture of a cow. Next day we had lamb—I drewed a little sheep. On Friday we had fish. See heah's de fish. (*She points out each drawing, in the space, with the date*)

MARY. (*Laughs*) A very clever idea Rhoda. And you draw very well.

RHODA. Yessum. It's easy when you put yo' mine on it. But dey tells me dey is men dat git a hundred dollars fo' one picture.

MARY. (*Looks closely at calendar*) But what sort of an animal—is *this*?

RHODA. Dat ain't no animal—dat's hash.

MARY. (*Laughs*) Oh—I see. (*Looks at house-book*) Possibly the amount is wrong. No, here it is. The eighteenth. The bill says chicken—my book says beef.

RHODA. Dat was chicken Mis' Alden. You done order beef; den, Mr. Hazleton come to dinner, and yo' change. (*Shows calendar*) See, heah's de chicken.

MARY. I remember. You're quite right. (*Changes book*) I forgot it. Then it's correct. (*Picks up gas bill*) The gas bill is higher this month, Rhoda.

RHODA. I'm jess as careful as I kin be. (*Noise off—elevator door opening*) Pears to me like ouah metre is mighty industrious. (*Going back at table, toward dining room*)

(*The outside hall-way door opens and MILDRED comes quickly in, humming a little song. She is a pretty, wholesome girl of eighteen. Evidently*

happy and contented. She is simply dressed, in a dark skirt, a white shirt waist—and wears a straw hat.)

MILDRED. Hello Sis.

MARY. You're home early, Mildred.

MILDRED. Yes. Things were rather quiet at the office to-day, and I hurried through, so Mr. Stimson let me go. Hello Rhoda.

RHODA. (*Pleasantly*) How are y'all, dis evening, Miss Mildred?

MILDRED. Everything's lovely. Did a package come for me?

RHODA. Yassum. Here it is. (*Gets dress box from dining-room and places it on table*)

MILDRED. (*Trying to open box*) A hard knot, of course. (*Pulling at string*)

MARY. Get my scissors Rhoda out of the sewing basket?

RHODA. Yassum. (*Goes to sewing basket up right and gets scissors*)

MILDRED. Oh!! I've hurt my finger. (*Rubs her finger*)

MARY. Let me help you. (*Takes scissors from RHODA, cuts string*)

(*MILDRED takes off top of box and drops it. RHODA picks it up. MILDRED takes out light, pretty summer dress from box and holds it up.*)

MILDRED. Isn't-that pretty?

RHODA. Um' hum.

MARY. Almost too pretty dear. I don't see how you can afford it.

MILDRED. I can't. That's why I bought it. Cost me two weeks' salary. (*Examines dress. MARY goes back to chair at table right*) Oh dear, It's been in the box so long, it's wrinkled.

RHODA. I got a hot iron on. I'll press the wrinkles out for you.

MILDRED. Oh, will you Rhoda.

RHODA. Yassum. Won't take me a minute.
(*Takes the dress and goes out right*)

MILDRED. (*Goes to MARY right*) There's another one, just like mine—in the same shop. Why don't you buy it Mary?

MARY. Oh, I don't need it.

MILDRED. Yes you do—you haven't had one new frock this summer.

MARY. Well then—I can't afford it.

MILDRED. Can't afford it. That's what you always say. (*Going toward center taking off her hat*) Lew isn't doing so badly. *He* always dresses well.

MARY. Of course. Lew must dress well. It's business.

MILDRED. If *you* don't dress well, people won't think he's *doing* any business.

MARY. Lew isn't rich Mildred. The real estate business is very uncertain.

MILDRED. If you can't afford to be a little good to yourself, how is it you're so good to *me*?

MARY. I'm not "so good" to you.

MILDRED. Yes you are. I couldn't live anywhere else, half as well for the same money. And that reminds me—(*Feels in her bag*) this is settlement day. (*Counts out seven one dollar bills*)

MARY. (*Looks at money*) You know I don't like to take it.

MILDRED. I shouldn't stay here with you, unless you did. I've got a good situation—and I get a good salary, for a girl. I can pay my way—and I like to feel independent.

MARY. Yes. I understand that.

MILDRED. But I think it's absurdly little.

MARY. (*Going to MILDRED right of centre. In a jocular way*) "Oh, dear Mrs. Landlady—please raise my board." (*Earnestly*) You see dear, you are not in any way—a—a—burden. Even

if you were not with us—we should still have the apartment—only your room would be empty. I should be very lonely, if you were not here.

MILDRED. Dear old sis. (MILDRED *slips the money into MARY's hand and MARY goes up to desk left*) It's sweet of you to talk like that, but I've noticed you worrying about money for ever so long. (*Back of table right*) You're puzzling your head now about bills. (*Handles the pile of bills*) It's none of my business I know—but—are you and Lew hard up?

MARY. No—certainly not.

MILDRED. Because if *you are*, you can have every cent of my salary till you turn the corner of Easy Street.

MARY. (*Going back from desk—to table right*) Nonsense. I am just trying to help Lew save money. (*She sits*) You know after we're married—we women must learn to practise economy.

MILDRED. Yes, but economy—is one thing—and—(*Hesitates*)

MARY. (*Quietly*) And parsimony is another. Is that what you mean?

MILDRED. No I don't. You know I don't. (*Slips her arm about MARY's head and strokes her brow*) You're not miserly—or stingy—but it hurts me Mary to see you always worrying about money

MARY. (*Quietly*) Sometimes it hurts *me*.

MILDRED. Worrying about pennies—Always denying yourself. Always—doing without—things you need.

MARY. I have all I need.

MILDRED. Things you *want*, then. It isn't as if Lew were poor. I know he isn't rich, but he's got a fair business.

MARY. Lew gives me all I ask——

MILDRED. Then ask for more. (*Going toward centre*)

(Enter right, RHODA with dress on her arm.)

RHODA. Here's yo' dress.

MILDRED. Thank you so much Rhoda. *(Takes it from her, holds it up and admires it)*

MARY. *(Wistfully)* It's awfully pretty.

RHODA. Pretty? Dat dress is a regular husband winner.

MARY. Have you tried it on?

MILDRED. Oh yes. Once when I was just looking—once after I thought it over—once before I bought it, and once after I bought it. *(During this speech she approaches MARY, and RHODA moves a little to the left—behind)*

MARY. *(Drily)* That's why this hook is loose. *(Finger a hook on dress which now lies in her lap)*

RHODA. How does it fit?

MILDRED. Better every time I wear it.

RHODA. I'd like to see it on you Miss Mildred.

MILDRED. I'll put it on.

MARY. Let me tighten this hook.

MILDRED. I'll change my petticoat. *(She runs out. Elevator door off)*

MARY. Get me a needle, Rhoda.

RHODA. Yassum, heah's yo' needle. *(Admiring the dress)* Miss Mildred's certainly got mighty genteel taste. *(The door bell in hall-way rings)*

MARY. See who that is Rhoda.

RHODA. Yassum. *(She goes into the hall-way. Opens door)* Howdy do Mr. Hazleton.

HAZLETON. Good evening Rhoda—

RHODA. Miss Mary. Heah's Mr. Hazleton.

MARY. Come in, Mr. Hazleton.

(Enter TOM HAZLETON from hall-way. He is a clean cut, young chap of twenty-five, very well dressed, though not a fop.)

TOM. How do you do, Mrs. Alden.

MARY. Glad to see you. Sit down.

(RHODA having closed the outer door into the hallway returns, stands in the background, casting approving glances at TOM.)

TOM. Lew in yet?

MARY. No—Did you come especially to see him?

TOM. Yes.

MARY. Oh; did you bring him those violets?
(Points to flower he carries. He is slightly confused. RHODA grins)

TOM. Lew? (He shakes his head smiling)

MARY. (Mischievously) Oh—Then they're for me. (Takes them from him, unwraps them, puts them in a little vase on her desk. Then laughs at TOM) Rhoda tell Miss Mildred that Mr. Hazleton is here, and say he has brought somebody—violets.

RHODA. (Grinning) Yassum.

(MILDRED quickly comes in from right. She has removed her waist and her arms are bare. She wears her silk petticoat; her hair is down. MARY and RHODA look up. MILDRED discovers TOM, who does not see her, as his back is turned. She smothers a gasp and quickly retreats right. RHODA enjoys this hugely.)

TOM. I stopped at Lew's office—on my way up-town, but he wasn't in.

MARY. He'll be home soon. You don't mind waiting.

TOM. Of course not.

(MILDRED with a white scarf wrapped about her shoulders, cautiously appears in doorway right, and casting a glance toward TOM, to be sure she is not seen, indignantly signals RHODA to bring her dress. As she disappears from the doorway, she is hastily doing up her hair.)

MARY. (Indicates dress) Will you take this Rhoda?

RHODA. Yassum. (*Takes dress and goes out right*)

MARY. Won't you stay and have dinner with us?

TOM. Much obliged—but I'm going to take Mildred to dinner.

MARY. Well what has Lew to do with it. Are you going to take *him* too?

TOM. (*Laughs*) No. I heard something to-day about a real estate deal—I think Lew ought to know of it. (*He sits by table*)

MARY. It's awfully kind of you to remember him.

TOM. (*Taking a cigarette from case*) I'd do anything for Lew. He landed me in the Real Estate business and showed me the ropes. If it hadn't been for him, I'd have had a pretty rough time. (*Indicates cigarette*) Do you mind?

MARY. (*Gives him match holder which is placed on table*) Go on—smoke. I suppose *some* of the men in real estate—are tricky.

TOM. Tricky? I know one man who sells corner lots that are six feet under water at low tide.

MARY. (*She sits on couch facing him*) Your firm handles a good deal of out of town business doesn't it?

TOM. Yes, we buy and sell estates—and bungalows—and farms——

MARY. Do you do much on Long Island?

TOM. That's *my* department. Keeps me busy too. Any man who wants to keep up with a Long Island Native—on a real estate deal, must put in twenty-seven hours a day, and then some.

MARY. When you're going about over there, if you should run across a little place—that somebody wants to sell——

TOM. Do you want to live in the country?

MARY. (*Wistfully*) I should love it.

TOM. Why don't you look over our improvement at Grasslands—the lots are cheap—half an hour

from town—we'll put up a bungalow—(*He enthusiastically goes around to back of table taking literature from his pocket*) Let me show you what a great place it is.

MARY. (*Laughing*) You are a good Real Estate man. (*TOM laughs, puts his folder in his pocket and goes back to his chair*) I don't want a bungalow—or a summer cottage. I'd love a place for the year round.

TOM. Are you and Lew thinking of living in the country?

MARY. I am—I'm always thinking of it. It's my dream—I lived in the country when I was a child. I love it. I hate the city. It's so crowded—and hot—and dirty—and expensive.

TOM. Hasn't Lew been able to find anything you like.

MARY. No. Not yet—I asked him three years ago, but I don't think he took me seriously. And then Lew is very busy, you know—and all his work lies here in town. I suppose he has forgotten. Still I think if I found a pretty little place—I could persuade him to try the country. I hope I could. He could have a car and motor in and out of town. He'd like that——

TOM. Yes, it would be jolly. I'll look about. Tell me just what you'd like.

MARY. A nice little house—eight or nine rooms—and a garden. Some trees about it—and flowers—and some land——

TOM. Oh, sort of a little farm.

MARY. Yes; big enough to raise chickens. That would give *me* something to do.

TOM. I might manage to pick up a bargain for you, chickens and all. You ought to get a nice little place for six or seven thousand dollars. How much would you pay down?

MARY. Oh—two thousand dollars, not more.

(MILDRED *enters right. Her hair is dressed and she wears the new dress.*)

MILDRED. Hello. (*Frankly extends her hand*)

TOM. Hello. (*He looks at her dress admiringly*)

MILDRED. I'm glad you like it.

TOM. There are some violets—for you. (*He gives MARY a look*)

MILDRED. For me. (*She takes violets from vase and puts them on her belt*) They're awfully sweet
Thank you.

MARY. Why didn't you tell me you were going out to dinner with Tommy?

MILDRED. Oh! Am I going out to dinner with you?

TOM. I've discovered a great little Italian place—down town. They serve a corking dinner—beginning with four miles of spaghetti—

MILDRED. How thrilling. Mary, will you lend me your pink hat. It just matches this dress. Mine won't go with this.

MARY. Of course. I'll get it for you. You needn't be in such a hurry. Mr. Hazleton wants to see Lew before he goes. (*To Tom*) He'll be home soon. (*MARY quietly goes out right*)

TOM. (*Thoughtfully*) Home. That's a nice word. Means a whole lot—doesn't it?

MILDRED. (*Left*) My goodness—don't look so doleful. One would think you have no home.

TOM. I haven't.

MILDRED. Oh what a pity. (*Lightly*) Mr. Hazleton—Real Estate Agent—business address—Brooklyn Bridge—home address Third bench to the right, Madison Square Park. (*She laughs*) What's the matter with your boarding house?

TOM. We're short on blankets—and long on prunes. (*He sits by table*) Overhead there's a lady with a parrot. The parrot thinks very well of

himself. Calls himself Pretty Polly. Tells the milkman about it at daylight. A gentleman across the hall has a bout with a cornet every evening. The cornet always gets the best of it.

MILDRED. I thought you moved to a new one last week.

TOM. I *did*. I'm going to move back to the old one—next week. But it's no use. They're all alike. It's no life for a man. It's too lonely. I tell you Lew Alden is a lucky fellow—and I envy him every time I come here.

MILDRED. Oh well. Cheer up. Some day you'll have a nice little home all your own——

TOM. That's what I've been working for, and saving for. I want a flat like this——

MILDRED. I beg your pardon—this is not a *flat*—it's an *apartment*.

TOM. What's the difference? No matter what you call it, it's home. I want one like it. I want to come home in the evening, and find someone waiting for me. (*There is a pause*) Do you know who I want to find there waiting?

MILDRED. (*Rather faintly*) No.

TOM. Why—you. No one else.

MILDRED. (*Laughing—in a constrained manner*) Tommy—don't be silly.

TOM. I never felt so sensible.

MILDRED. Mary—is sure to come in—and laugh at you.

TOM. Just so *you* don't laugh at me——

MILDRED. I won't listen. (*He detains her, holding her hand*)

TOM. I know I'm not doing this very well—but it's the first time I ever did it——

MILDRED. (*Unconsciously*) I should hope so.

TOM. If I only had to sell you a house—I could talk for three hours——

MILDRED. (*Uneasily*) Tommy—please don't hold my hand.

TOM. I won't. If you'll promise to sit down, and listen—Will you?

MILDRED. Yes, go on. (*They sit on end of couch; a pause*)

TOM. I can't talk romance—and sigh—but I've got it all here—just the same. You're the only girl for me Mildred.

MILDRED. Am I—Tommy?

TOM. Don't you know it?

MILDRED. Yes.

TOM. Does it make any difference to you—Do you care?

MILDRED. (*Rising*) I won't say a word—and I won't listen to you any longer. You've taken me—by surprise——

TOM. By surprise? Why I've been your shadow for two years. I fairly haunt this place—the elevator man thinks I *live* here.

MILDRED. I do like you Tommy—a lot—(*He rises quickly*) but——

TOM. But—(*He takes ring from pocket*) Will you wear this Mildred?

MILDRED. Oh, isn't it pretty! (*Takes it and admires it*)

TOM. Will you wear it?

MILDRED. Oh no—really——

TOM. Well—just try it on. (*He slips it on her finger*)

MILDRED. It wouldn't be fair—I really don't mean to keep it—you know. (*She admires it*)

(*Enter MARY with hat.*)

MARY. Here's my pink hat, Mildred.

MILDRED. Thank you so much. (*Tries to slip off ring. To TOM*) Oh, Tommy, it won't come off.

TOM. (*To MILDRED*) I hope it *never* comes off.

MARY. Here, dear. (*MILDRED goes to MARY to take hat, keeping her hand behind her. MARY puts*

the hat on her, and steps back to look at the effect. There is a ring, hurried and insistent, at the door in the hallway)

TOM. Perhaps that is Lew.

MARY. Oh no. Lew has his key. (*Another ring*)

(RHODA passes out from dining-room into hallway.)

MILDRED. It sounds like Mrs. Beecher. (*Another ring*)

TOM. She must be in a hurry.

MILDRED. She's always in a hurry—and always in trouble.

(RHODA in hallway opens the door and MRS. BEECHER enters, talking volubly.)

MRS. BEECHER. How do you do Rhoda—is Mrs. Alden in, or Miss Carr? I'd like to see them just a moment—it's very important.

MARY. (*Down right*) Come in Mrs. Beecher.

(MRS. BEECHER continues to talk as she passes along the hallway, then enters the room, followed by RHODA who casts a disapproving look upon her and goes on out right. MRS. BEECHER is a woman of thirty-five. Her manner is hurried—often furtive. She is faded and her face is somewhat drawn—and lined with care. She is well dressed in the manner of a woman of fashion.)

MRS. BEECHER. (*Right centre*) I am so glad you are at home Mrs. Alden—and I really do hope I don't disturb you. How are you, my dear. (*To MILDRED*) My, what a nice little gown. And it becomes you so well. Pink is your color. Oh yes I like it—it's very pretty——

MILDRED. (*Left centre*) You know Mr. Hazleton?

MRS. BEECHER. (*Greets him*) How do you do, Mr. Hazleton. So glad to see you.

TOM. Thank you. How is Mr. Beecher.

MRS. BEECHER. Oh splendid. (*Uneasily*) I'm expecting him home every minute. (*She indicates to MILDRED quietly to send TOM away*)

MILDRED. Tommy—Mrs. Beecher is dying to talk over—my dress. Suppose you wait in Lew's den.

(*TOM nods and starts right*)

MRS. BEECHER. (*Going extreme left in front of table. Relieved*) Oh don't let me drive you away.

TOM. (*Going*) Not at all. I just ran in to see Mr. Alden—on business. (*Right centre*) Where does Lew keep his cigarettes?

MILDRED. Lew doesn't smoke cigarettes.

MARY. There's a jar of tobacco on his desk——

TOM. Thank you—no. I'll run next door, and get what I want.

MILDRED. Now don't be long——

MARY. No. Lew may be here at any moment.

MRS. BEECHER. So glad to have seen you Mr. Hazleton.

TOM. Remember me to Mr. Beecher. (*Quietly goes out, hallway*)

MRS. BEECHER. (*Coming to MARY right centre*) Oh my dear Mrs. Alden—I am in such a pickle.

MILDRED. Too bad. (*Centre*)

MARY. (*Right*) What is it?

MRS. BEECHER. I wonder if you can help me.

MARY. If I can, I will.

MRS. BEECHER. Lend me three dollars. (*MILDRED and MARY exchange meaning looks*) Will you? (*MARY begins to look in hand-bag*) I'll pay it back to you, the first thing to-morrow

morning. You see my dear, I must have it—to pay the plumber.

MILDRED. Only three dollars? He can't be much of a plumber.

MRS. BEECHER. He's waiting now. In my kitchen—He says he won't go until he gets his money. So impertinent——

MARY. Why not let him wait—and when your husband comes——

MRS. BEECHER. Oh no. That won't do at all. My husband mustn't see him—he thinks the bill is *paid*.

MILDRED. Why should he *think* so?

MRS. BEECHER. I—I *told* him so.

MARY. Oh—I see.

MRS. BEECHER. And I really meant to pay it. A week ago I asked Harvey for five dollars to pay the plumber——

MILDRED. Five?

MRS. BEECHER. Yes. I—I thought the bill—"might" be five—and—oh—you know how men are, he grumbled about it—but he gave it to me—Then I forgot all about the plumber—and spent the money on—something else, I needed—when Harvey asked me about it—I told him I had paid it.

MILDRED. How foolish—why didn't you tell him you spent it——

MRS. BEECHER. When you're married—you'll understand why. You don't know my husband. If he comes home and finds the bill unpaid—and finds that I made a "mistake" in the amount—oh my goodness. He's apt to be home at any moment—and if you can let me have the money I promise faithfully to give it back to you to-morrow morning.

MARY. (*Puts down bag*) I'm so sorry—I haven't three dollars in my purse.

MRS. BEECHER. Oh, dear. (*Sits in the arm-chair and covers her eyes with her handkerchief*)

MILDRED. I'll let you have the money, Mrs. Beecher.

MRS. BEECHER. Oh will you. Will you—I'll never forget it my dear, and I promise faithfully you shall have it back to-morrow.

(Elevator and BEECHER's voice outside.)

MILDRED. I'll get it for you. *(She goes out right)*

MRS. BEECHER. Oh dear he mustn't see that plumber. *(Goes into hallway, as BEECHER, apparently talking and laughing with some one, passes along the outer hallway at back. MARY goes to left)* Harvey, Harvey. Here I am dear. In Mrs. Alden's—come in. *(She brings him in from the outer hall, volubly talking to him)*

BEECHER. I'm not properly dressed. *(She ignores his protests that he is not presentable, etc. and they come in the room. BEECHER is a middle-aged man, slightly bald, querulous and irritable in appearance. Very well dressed)* How d'ye do Mrs. Alden?

MARY. Glad to see you, Mr. Beecher. Sit down.

(Putting his hat on little table in alcove room.)

BEECHER. Isn't this rather an inconvenient time for us to drop in. You must be just about to have dinner.

MARY. Oh no. Mr. Alden isn't home yet. Sit down. *(She sits left and sews)*

MRS. BEECHER. Yes dear. Do sit down, and rest. You must be tired. *(She presses him into arm-chair and leans over him in a caressing manner—meanwhile watching anxiously for MILDRED)* So glad you're home.

BEECHER. *(In rather a sarcastic manner)* Yes, so I see. *(He looks at her, in rather a puzzled way)*

MRS. BEECHER. I was just trying to persuade Mrs. Alden, and her husband to come over and play five hundred—to-night.

BEECHER. To-night? We're going to the Roof Garden to-night.

MRS. BEECHER. Oh are we? How nice—I just love a roof garden, don't you Mrs. Alden.

MARY. I very seldom go——

MRS. BEECHER. You ought to go out more. "Have a good time while you're living—you'll be a long time dead." Let's see—who said that—was it Mark Twain or Brigham Young?

BEECHER. (*Emphatically*) I'll lay ten to one—it was *not* Brigham Young.

(*Enter MILDRED right. She has money in her hand. She sees Mr. BEECHER and is surprised and ill at ease. Slips money behind her. MRS. BEECHER is also ill at ease.*)

MILDRED. Good evening, Mr. Beecher. (*Offers him her hand*)

BEECHER. (*Rising*) How d'ye do Miss Carr—(*He shakes her hand*)

(*MRS. BEECHER works around right, back of MILDRED.*)

MILDRED. Splendid. Don't let me disturb you.

BEECHER. Oh but we're going.

MARY. Oh don't be in a hurry.

MILDRED. (*Trying to think of something to hold him*) How did the second race go to-day?

BEECHER. Luxembourg won in a walk.

MRS. BEECHER. Harvey—have *you* been betting on the races again.

BEECHER. Luxembourg wasn't a gamble. He was a sure thing. I got down two to one on him.

MRS. BEECHER. Oh you *won*—how nice. (*MILDRED standing facing Mr. BEECHER. MRS.*

BEECHER *comes up behind her and takes the money*)

BEECHER. Say—while I think of it—next time you have anything wrong about the house, go to another plumber. (MRS. BEECHER, *dismayed. represses it*) You too, Mrs. Alden. This fellow Turner, at the corner stopped me, this morning—and dunned me——

MRS. BEECHER. Oh that bill was paid a week ago.

BEECHER. That's what I told him.

MRS. BEECHER. I've got a receipt——

BEECHER. I'll take it down there and show it to him. (*He moves as if to go to door*)

MRS. BEECHER. (*Hastily*) I'll get it for you.

BEECHER. Come on.

MRS. BEECHER. (*Desperately*) Oh, by the way, Miss Carr was asking me about to-morrow's races—I told her you would know. (MILDRED is annoyed. As soon as BEECHER turns to MILDRED, MRS. BEECHER slips away and goes out through hallway, unseen by BEECHER)

BEECHER. (*Laughing*) Do you play the ponies?

MILDRED. No, but I think races are awfully interesting. I suppose you've got a—"long shot" picked for to-morrow.

BEECHER. Yes, in the third race—Bantam. He'll go to the post ten to one. There'll be a killing—I'll clean up——

(*Elevator is heard in the hallway.*)

MARY. Oh, there's Lew.

MILDRED. (*Impulsively*) Thank Heavens.

BEECHER. Eh?

MILDRED. (*Lying to BEECHER glibly*) We can't have supper till he comes, and I'm starved. (*She goes toward right*)

(LEW ALDEN comes in from hallway. He is a strongly built, kindly faced, well dressed man of forty.)

ALDEN. (*To MARY who meets him*) How's Mary. (*Kisses her*)

MARY. Glad you're home. (*She remains right*)

ALDEN. Sorry I'm late. (*To MILDRED*) Hello Sis. (*Sees BEECHER*) How are you, Beecher?

BEECHER. Hello Alden. (*They shake hands*)

ALDEN. Haven't seen much of you this week. (*He goes up in little room back and puts down magazines and papers*)

BEECHER. No. There was some talk of a game of five hundred to-night. But we're going out.

ALDEN. Come over and play to-morrow night.

MARY. Yes, do.

BEECHER. I'll see what Mrs. Beecher says. (*He looks about for her*) Why where is she?

(*MRS. BEECHER comes in quickly from hallway and glances at MILDRED. Her face shows relief. She nods in a confidential manner at MARY.*)

MRS. BEECHER. Oh—good evening Mr. Alden. (*To BEECHER*) See Harvey. Here's the receipt. (*He looks at it*) See it is dated a week ago, and there's the workman's name.

BEECHER. I'll bet that fellow held out on the boss. (*Chuckles*) Is that a three or a five.

MRS. BEECHER. Oh a five dear. (*Taking the receipt from him quickly*) That's what I paid him. But aren't you ever coming home. (*He stares. She folds up the receipt and tucks it in her bosom*) We mustn't keep Mr. and Mrs. Alden from their dinner.

MARY. So glad you ran in.

ALDEN. To-morrow night then.

BEECHER. Yes, after dinner. (*To MILDRED and MARY*) Good evening. (*They bow*) Say if you want a sure thing in the third race to-morrow.

ALDEN. No thanks. (*They start out into hall chatting*)

MRS. BEECHER. Let's go shopping to-morrow,
Mrs. Alden. (*Back of chair right*)

MARY. Shopping. (*Left of chair*)

MRS. BEECHER. Yes Harvey won to-day and if I don't spend it, he's sure to lose to-morrow. He always loses on a sure thing. (ALDEN and BEECHER *just going out of hall door*) I'm so much obliged to you dear, and I'll return the loan early in the morning.

MILDRED. I'm glad to help you out. (*Right of chair*)

MRS. BEECHER. Good night.

MILDRED & MARY. Good night. Good night.

(MRS. BEECHER *goes into hallway.*)

MILDRED. Isn't she dreadful. I felt so ashamed.

MARY. What a horrible life she leads—I wish—I wish we didn't know them.

MILDRED. I suppose I'm a fool, but I couldn't help lending her the money. (*Going centre*)

MARY. She forces me to help her deceive her husband. She insists on confiding to me the most unpleasant things about their life.

MILDRED. He's a selfish thing—always playing the races—while she always needs money.

(LEW *comes back from the hallway.*)

LEW. What are you two doing—gossiping?

MARY. Tommy Hazleton was here to see you. He'll be back presently. (*To MILDRED*) Oh—my dear aren't you going to wear gloves.

MILDRED. Oh yes, I forgot. I'll get them. (*She goes out right*)

ALDEN. What was the matter with Mrs. Beecher?

MARY. (*Busy at table right with bills*) I didn't notice anything wrong.

ALDEN. Where are your eyes—she's in trouble—

it's plain to me—and I'm a "mere man." (*Busy with papers and magazines. He hands her one as she passes. She says: "thank you"*)

MARY. (*Lightly*) I believe she did say something about a misunderstanding with a plumber—(*Goes to couch left of table and puts bills on table*)

ALDEN. (*Nods*) I see. The Beechers seem to be always having trouble about money. (*Throwing wrapper of magazines into basket by desk*)

MARY. (*Quietly*) Yes. But that's rather commonplace, isn't it? Nearly every married couple seems to have some sort of difficulty about money.

ALDEN. We're one of the lucky exceptions.

MARY. Are we?

ALDEN. Why of course. I don't remember that we've ever had a word about money—since we've been married—Do you? (*He sits right of table centre*)

MARY. No.

ALDEN. Of course we never have as much as we want (*Laughs*) but then no one ever has *that* much.

MARY. I suppose not.

ALDEN. Still, we seem to get on. We have—enough—eh?

MARY. Yes—we seem to get on.

ALDEN. (*He looks at her curiously*) Is anything wrong?

MARY. Nothing.

ALDEN. (*Goes to her*) Sure? (*She shakes her head*) I'm glad. I do the best I can. (*She nods*) The little place here isn't much, but it's all I can afford just now. We seem to have bully little dinners, and Rhoda is a good darkey to work. You have a charge account at Franklin Simon's—and you always look well, I see many women more expensively dressed, but none that looks any prettier. (*Pinches her cheek*) It isn't that I don't want a fine house—it isn't that I don't want you to have a car—and lots of fine things—

MARY. I don't want a car, and fine things, Lew. I know you work hard, and do the best you can——

ALDEN. Then what is it you *do* want. What's the matter?

MARY. I am not complaining.

ALDEN. I wish you would. If there's anything wrong, tell me. If I can, I'll set it right. (*He looks at her a moment. She says nothing*) You've something on your mind——(*He turns from her and passes the table. He sees the bills, picks one up, looks at it, then picks up others, and glances at them*) Bills?

MARY. Yes.

ALDEN. Is that's what bothering you? (*Looking them over*) Nothing to worry about *here*.

MARY. No. They're just the same as usual——

ALDEN. They're never big. You're the best little housekeeper in New York. I'll settle these in the morning. Gas—Electric light—Butcher—Baker—Green Grocer. (*Looks at her*) Is this all? (*Lightly*) Have *you* had a "misunderstanding" with a plumber?

MARY. Of course not.

ALDEN. (*Putting bills in his pocket*) You don't owe—something—you're afraid to tell me.

MARY. If I owed anything, I shouldn't be *afraid* to tell you.

ALDEN. Of course not. "Afraid" isn't the word. Reluctant—I paid a hundred and a quarter for a dress suit last year. I remember I was "reluctant" to tell you about it——

MARY. (*Smiling*) I told you to get it—and I kept after you till you did get it. It was worth the money——

ALDEN. (*Looks at her in thought*) You don't need any money do you?

MARY. Yes.

ALDEN. Is that what you've been worrying about? Well—well why didn't you ask me?

MARY. That's just it—I *hate* to ask you.

ALDEN. (*Puzzled*) You—hate to—ask me?

MARY. For money—yes.

ALDEN. But why? I'm your husband.

MARY. That doesn't make it easier——

ALDEN. You're welcome to all I've got, if you want it. You've a *right* to it. Have I ever refused you?

MARY. No.

ALDEN. (*With growing wonder*) But you hate to ask me?

MARY. (*Clasping her hands, nervously*) Yes. Yes. Oh, if you knew how I hate it. If you could only know how every woman hates it.

ALDEN. Come on, let's talk this over. I never had an idea—of anything like *this*. Why do you hate it?

MARY. It's humiliating.

ALDEN. Not a bit. I enjoy giving it to you—just as much as you enjoy spending it. Good Lord Mary—don't let a little thing like this make you unhappy——

MARY. It isn't a little thing.

ALDEN. But I don't understand——

MARY. Of course you don't. No man can understand—Try and put yourself in my place. (*As he rises and slowly goes to right center*)

ALDEN. (*Laughing*) I wish I could get all I want, merely by asking for it. (*Pulls money out of his pocket*) How much do you want?

MARY. Twenty dollars.

ALDEN. (*In good-humored wonder*) What for? (*Counting out money*)

(MARY looks at him and turns away repressing agitation.)

MARY. (*Slowly*) What for? That's the question that makes a woman realize—she is only a wife.

ALDEN. (*Going to table*) I'm sorry. I didn't mean to ask that; I spoke before I thought.

MARY. I know—but the question was in your mind. A husband gives his wife shelter, food, clothes, luxuries—and when she asks for money, he wonders what she wants with it. That's why every woman hates to ask. That's why I hate it. It makes me feel so—so dependent. It's like a child saying "father give me a nickel to buy some candy."

ALDEN. Come now, you're supersensitive about it. Every business has a treasurer. A household is a sort of business. But what's mine is yours. You get just as much of it, as I do—more in fact. Outside my business—I don't spend——

MARY. It isn't how much you spend Lew—or how much you are willing to give me. The point is that if you only have ten cents, you can spend it without anyone saying "what are you going to spend that for" or wondering what you are going to spend it for. Before we were married, I was taking care of myself—I earned my living. My salary was mine—I never had to account for it.

ALDEN. But you've had *more* since we married——

MARY. But not the same independence.

ALDEN. I never knew you felt this way—why have you never spoken of it? Why honey, you know I love you, and I wouldn't do anything to hurt you for the world——

MARY. I know you wouldn't Lew——

ALDEN. But it doesn't seem to me there's any help for it.

MARY. Yes there is. I should love to feel that I am not only your wife—but your partner. I should love to help you—to save——

ALDEN. You *do* help me. You've made a home for me—that's your end. You take care of that, and let me fight it out down town. I'll take care of you—and do the saving——

MARY. How much have you saved Lew?

ALDEN. Well—I've not begun to save yet. I'm establishing a business that will pay later on, and as

fast as I get money, I put it in that. But things are looking brighter all the time. Now promise me, whenever anything troubles you, you won't hide it, but come and have it out, and we'll settle it as we have settled this.

MARY. But we haven't settled this.

ALDEN. Of course we have. As well as it can be settled. You hate to ask for money. I won't wait to be asked. Understand? I don't grudge you anything I've got, so if I don't remember, just remind me. (*He lights a cigar*)

MARY. You don't seem to understand just what I'm trying to tell you.

ALDEN. I'm afraid not—Don't be unreasonable Mary. What do you suggest. What do you want me to do? Tell me.

MARY. If you only gave me one dollar a week—I should like to have it at a certain time without having to remind you.

ALDEN. I'm trying to fix it that way, only it seems you're not rebelling against me, but against marriage, against custom—A wife doesn't get a salary.

MARY. I wonder why.

ALDEN. (*Affectionately*) Because honey, if they did, I couldn't afford you, for you'd draw down a salary that only a millionaire could pay—

(*Enter MILDRED right.*)

MILDRED. Mary, I took a pair of yours. You don't mind, do you?

MARY. Oh, no.

ALDEN. I think I'll *shave* before dinner.

MARY. You'll have to hurry.

LEW. Just once over. (*Goes out right*)

MILDRED. Hasn't Tommy come back yet?

MARY. Not yet. (*She begins to add figures at her desk*)

MILDRED. This is once he can't say I kept him

waiting. By the way—have you my bank book?
(*Left of couch*)

MARY. Yes. (*Hands her a bank book*)

MILDRED. I want to leave it at the bank tomorrow to be balanced. I'm afraid I haven't anything left—since I paid for my dress.

(*There is the sound of an argument between MR. and MRS. BEECHER coming from the court through the window up left. MARY and MILDRED express distaste.*)

MRS. BEECHER. Now Harvey am I going to get that money, or am I *not*?

BEECHER. You are *not*. What do you think I am, a millionaire? (*He slams down the window*)

MILDRED. I think she asked him for a nickel. (*MILDRED casually opens and glances at bank book*) Two thousand dollars—first of the month. (*MARY starts slightly and looks up. MILDRED looks at book*) Why this isn't mine.

MARY. (*Quietly*) No. It's mine. (*Goes to her. Takes the book, exchanges it for another which is in same compartment of desk. She gives MILDRED her book and locks her own in desk compartment.*)

MILDRED. Yours. Two thousand dollars. Oh, you plutocrat.

MARY. (*Glancing off right*) S-s-sh. (*Raises a warning finger*)

MILDRED. Oh! Lew doesn't know!

MARY. Nobody knows—except *you*.

MILDRED. Where did you get it?

MARY. I saved it. I've been saving it—for years. A little at time. Saved it out of what Lew has given me. And I didn't rob him of any comfort. He's never missed anything. But I watched the expenses. I cut them to the bone—if it was only pennies. I saved them. I denied myself. I love pretty dresses, but I've hunted bargains. I

love nice lingerie. I've made my own. I've skimped and stinted. Oh my God—when I think of what that two thousand dollars means to me—
(*Gradually during speech she goes out to centre*)

MILDRED. And it's yours—your own. (*Left*)

MARY. Don't you think I've earned it.

MILDRED. I don't think it's worth what you've gone through to get it. Hasn't Lew ever suspected?

MARY. What? That I did without? Men don't notice shabbiness in a wife. They notice extravagance.

MILDRED. (*Puzzled*) I know it wasn't just for the money—why did you do it? (*She sits on the couch*)

MARY. So that some day I could get out of the city. I want a little country home.

MILDRED. I don't see why *you* should do all the saving.

MARY. Lew can't save—At least he doesn't. He won't let me help him.

MILDRED. When he finds out, he will be so ashamed.

MARY. More likely, he'll be angry.

MILDRED. (*Thoughtfully*) I shouldn't wonder—because you're keeping it a secret.

MARY. I'd feel guilty if I were doing it for myself alone—but it's for *us*. Every dollar Lew gets, goes into his business. That's why I'm keeping this to myself. If he knew I had it—it would go.

MILDRED. He'd pay it back though; wouldn't he?

MARY. If Lew borrowed money from a stranger, it would be repaid the day it was due. But (*She hesitates*) when Lew and I were married, I had a little money. Not much,—only five hundred dollars. I had earned it. I had planned what to do with it. There came a sudden crisis in Lew's business. He had to have money, quick. I loaned him—five hundred dollars. He never—paid it back.

MILDRED. Never paid it back——

MARY. Understand—he didn't mean to take my money. He *meant* to repay it. He means to give it to me—some day. He has mentioned it often—but—he always puts it off. And he laughs—and pays me the interest (*She walks across to left*)

MILDRED. I'd hate anyone that would do that to me—no matter who——

MARY. Lew loves me Mildred—and I love him. He's not dishonest—he's thoughtless.

MILDRED. Are all men like that?

MARY. No. Only husbands.

(*Elevator door slams. TOMMY HAZLETON is heard whistling cheerfully outside the hall door.*)

MILDRED. There's Tommy. (*She goes to hallway and calls to him*) Oo—oo! (*The hall door opens*) Come in Tommy—Lew's home. (*TOMMY comes in from hallway and looks around*) She's gone.

(*TOMMY snickers.*)

MARY. (*Calls off right*) Lew. Oh Lew.

LEW. (*Off right*) Yes, dear.

MARY. Here's Mr. Hazleton.

LEW. Just a minute.

MARY. (*To TOM*) He's coming.

MILDRED. Now, I suppose, you've something very important, and very secret, to discuss, and you'd like to have the whole place to yourselves. (*She smilingly goes into rear room and softly plays the piano*)

(*Enter LEW ALDEN.*)

ALDEN. Hello Tommy.

TOMMY. Hello, Lew.

ALDEN. Been waiting long?

TOMMY. About four cigarettes and an evening paper. (*MARY starts out*) Don't let me drive you away, Mrs. Alden. This isn't a lodge meeting.

(*He hands LEW a bulky envelope which contains legal papers. MARY goes in alcove room with MILDRED*)

ALDEN. Hello. What's this? (*Left*)

TOM. The papers for the Page Property Deal. (*Left centre*)

ALDEN. Is the deal off? (*TOMs nods*) But Howard wants it.

TOM. He can't put up the cash.

ALDEN. I considered it settled. I've been counting on it. Do you know where you can reach him, on the 'phone.

TOM. I suppose he's at home.

ALDEN. Call him up will you Tommy. See if he can't manage the first payment. It means a lot to me to have that to-morrow.

TOM. I'll have a try. (*He goes into hallway, then into LEW's den*) Hello—Columbus 7090—(*He closes door*)

MARY. (*In arch of back room. To MILDRED*) S-s-sh. 'Phone. (*MILDRED stops playing. MARY approaches LEW sympathetically*) Too bad your business follows you home—I hope it's nothing serious.

ALDEN. It's a rotten trick of this man Howard. I put a deal through for him. It cost me time and money. Now he backs down.

MILDRED. (*Comes into room*) Has Tommy gone again?

MARY. He's using the telephone in Lew's den. (*To ALDEN*) It's too bad dear, but don't worry.

ALDEN. When Howard told me he was sure to close this deal to-day, I paid a thousand dollars on an option on a factory site. I can sell it in a month for ten thousand dollars. There's a crowd that simply has to have it. There's twenty-five hundred due to-morrow. If I don't pay it, I'll lose my thousand—and the prospective profit.

MARY. Well, can't you borrow the money.

ALDEN. I'm carrying all I can bear on another big deal—caught without ready money—and no security I can realize on, quickly.

MARY. (*With deep feeling*) Oh, I'm so sorry Lew—so sorry.

ALDEN. Now don't you worry, Mary. Serves me right. It will teach me a lesson.

MILDRED. Oh Lew, I hope you don't lose your money.

TOM. (*Comes out of den*) I've got Howard on the wire Lew—he just told me a corking lie—and he wants to tell you a few. Come talk to him.

(ALDEN joins TOMMY in the hallway and his voice is heard an instant on the 'phone. Then door closes.)

MILDRED. (*Looking at MARY*) Poor Lew. (*Right of table*)

MARY. Poor Lew. (*On couch*)

MILDRED. Too bad to think of him losing his money.

MARY. Yes—it's so much.

MILDRED. And the profit too.

MARY. I know what you're thinking, Mildred. (*She rises and walks about restlessly*)

MILDRED. Couldn't you—just this once——

MARY. (*Rising and going toward right*) Oh I want to—I want to—but I can't. I mustn't. A thousand dollars means a good deal to Lew—but it means *everything* to me. You can't realize how hard it has been to get it together. It might be lost. I don't dare to let him know I've got it—(*With great emotion*) Oh, I don't know what to do—I don't know what to do. (*MARY right*)

(*The voices of TOM and ALDEN are heard in conversation and they re-enter the room.*)

LEW. That fellow always was a piker. (*He goes left*)

TOM. He can certainly think up more gilt edge excuses——

ALDEN. I was a fool to pay any attention to him.

TOM. Well, I'll see you downtown to-morrow.
(*To MILDRED*) I'm sorry I've kept you waiting

MILDRED. Shall we go?

TOM. If you're ready——

MARY. I hope you have a nice time. (*Going into hall with MILDRED*)

TOM. (*Goes to LEW*) By the way, I can let you have eight hundred if that will help any. (*Lew shakes hands with TOM*) Now for the raviola and the red ink. (*All bid each other good night. TOM and MILDRED go out*)

MARY. Oh, it's hard luck, Lew. (*She goes to him and caresses him*)

ALDEN. The worst of it is that it's practically a sure thing—any time in the next fifteen days, and if I had a few days' time, I could get the money. Tommy says he'll lend me eight hundred——

MARY. Oh isn't that good of him. Eight hundred. I wish I could help you. I wish I——
could.

ALDEN. Why, of course? I know you'd help me, if you could.

MARY. And you say it's *sure*?

ALDEN. Absolutely.

(*MARY stands behind him a moment, out of his sight. She looks at him, and her mental struggle shows in her face.*)

MARY. Lew—I—(*BEECHER is heard whistling through the window in the court. MARY hears him, and glances through window*)

ALDEN. What did you say Mary?

MARY. Sam Mears lives just around the corner.

ALDEN. Yes. I rode home in his car.

MARY. You lent him money once; without security.

ALDEN. He paid it back—but it was a favor. He might do as much for me—I'll 'phone him—*(He starts out, she goes with him)*

MARY. No. Don't telephone. Someone downstairs might listen. I don't want people in the house to know our affairs. Slip around there. *(She gives him his hat)* See him——

ALDEN. You're right. I will. That's a good idea of yours, Mary. *(At door)* You know you're a wise little thing—and the best little wife in the world.

MARY. Am I?

ALDEN. *(Going up hallway)* I won't be gone long—Everything will come right——

(The door closes in outer hallway. MARY sighs. Then with resolution approaches the window and speaks out)

MARY. *(Quietly)* Mr. Beecher——

(BEECHER in his window, about to drink, chokes.)

BEECHER. *(Off left)* What is it Mrs. Alden.

MARY. Can you run over a moment. My husband wants to speak to you.

BEECHER. Certainly. You don't mind if I keep my slippers on—do you

MARY. Not at all. Not at all.

BEECHER. *(Explaining to his wife)* Alden wants to see me. I'm going over. *(Disappears)*

MRS. BEECHER. *(Looks out)* Is that you, Mrs. Alden.

MARY. *(Gaily)* Yes. We'll take good care of Mr. Beecher and return him immediately.

MRS. BEECHER. Yes, we're going to the roof garden.

(MRS. BEECHER *laughs and the sound of her voice dies away*. MARY *goes to desk*. *Unlocks compartment*. *Gets out her check book*. *Sits at table and makes out a check*. BEECHER *is heard at outer hallway door*.)

MARY. Rhoda. (RHODA *comes in and admits BEECHER*. BEECHER *comes through hallway into the room*. RHODA *goes out*) Sit down.

(*He sits in arm-chair right and looks about*.)

BEECHER. Where's Alden?

MARY. He'll be here in a moment. Before he comes I want to speak to you.

BEECHER. Certainly. If there's anything I can do——

MARY. You can do me a great favor. (*Approaching him*) Now—don't be surprised—I want you to lend my husband—two thousand dollars.

BEECHER. (*Lightly*) If I had two thousand dollars, I'd buy a half interest in Central Park.

MARY. I'm not joking.

BEECHER. Frankly, Mrs. Alden—where do you suppose I'm going to raise two thousand dollars——

MARY. I will lend it to you, and *you* will lend it to my husband. (*She hands him a check*)

BEECHER. (*Looks at the check*) Pay to Harvey Beecher—two thousand dollars—But why don't *you* lend it to him?

MARY. Why I—I don't want him to know it comes from *me*. (*Quickly*) Mr. Alden is in a difficulty. I'm—not supposed to know—you see. (*He nods*) But Mr. Hazleton told me. You can say he told you. Mr. Alden needs this money at once. Even if I "knew" I fear it would humiliate

him to accept assistance from me—when he went into the affair—against my advice.

BEECHER. I see. I see.

MARY. So I must not appear in it, at all. You just come along, as a business man—lend him the money—take his note.

BEECHER. Six per cent—three months——

MARY. That's usual?

BEECHER. Quite.

MARY. When he pays it back to you—you can give it back to me. He will think there has been an ordinary business deal—and his pride will not be hurt. (*She goes toward desk*) Here is my bank book to show you the money is available.

BEECHER. (*Rising*) Not necessary—I assure you——

MARY. Will you do this for me?

BEECHER. Gladly and I'm proud to share your confidence. I'm proud you trust me—And you're a woman in a thousand. Just to protect you—(*He writes*) here's my I. O. U. for two thousand. (*He offers her I. O. U.*)

MARY. I don't need that——

BEECHER. Take it—I might get excited and play a sure thing—then where would you be. (*He laughs*)

MARY. (*Takes the I. O. U.*) And please arrange it so the money reaches him early in the morning.

BEECHER. May I trouble you for an envelope, and a sheet of paper?

MARY. Oh, there's lots here on my desk. (*He goes to desk*)

BEECHER. I'll kite a check.

MARY. (*Back of him*) I don't know what that is but it sounds dangerous.

BEECHER. (*Glancing at window*) I think the light is better here. (*He moves to table in alcove room*) I'm sending your check to my bank. It

will be there in the morning when the bank opens

MARY. Sure.

BEECHER. Have a special delivery stamp?

MARY. No, but here are six two's.

BEECHER. That's alright. (*He puts several stamps on the envelope. Scribbles a note, puts check in letter, seals it.*) Have your maid mail it at once, please.

MARY. Rhoda.

RHODA. Yassum.

MARY. Drop this in the mail chute, please.

RHODA. Yassum. (*She goes out with letter*)

BEECHER. I'll give him my check. He'll cash it early. Now don't worry—everything is all right.

MARY. And he'll never suspect it came from me.

BEECHER. No. Now to turn to strictly personal matters. (*Elevator door slams out right*) When Mrs. Beecher asks me what Mr. Alden wanted with me, what shall I tell her?

(*ALDEN comes in from outer hallway.*)

ALDEN. Saw Mears. He can let me have it next week. Oh—hello, Beecher. (*He moodily sits in chair, right*)

BEECHER. Haven't got a minute—just dropped in. (*MARY signals to BEECHER*) Tom Hazleton says you need ready cash to pull you through a deal—Well, I made a killing to-day—and if a couple of thousand will help you out——

ALDEN. Beecher—this is great. It's fine of you—But I can't give you any security——

BEECHER. I'll take your note.

ALDEN. Do you mean it——

BEECHER. Of course. (*Going toward desk*) Suppose we clean up now—we're going to the Roof Garden. (*Begins to write at desk*)

ALDEN. I say, old man, you don't know what this means to me—(*Up left*)

BEECHER. Cut out the gratitude. (*Laughing*) Some day when I've won a long shot, I'll let you sell me a house and lot.

ALDEN. You see, dear—everything is all right. Thanks to Beecher——

MARY. Thanks to Mr. Beecher. (*Timidly*) Can't I help you any, Lew?

(RHODA quietly enters.)

ALDEN. No, honey. I'm all right now. (*Pinches her cheek*) Beecher and I will fix this up in a moment. (*Smiling*) What do you know about business, eh?

MARY. (*Ironically*) Nothing. Come Rhoda. We'll get dinner.

(RHODA goes out. MARY stands in the doorway R., watching them. BEECHER takes ALDEN'S note.)

CURTAIN.

ACT II.

SCENE:—*The Second Act occurs in the ALDEN Apartment, the following evening at seven-thirty. When the curtain rises, the stage is empty. The room is almost dark. A bright light shines through chinks in the curtains, on arch to dining room, and the rattle of dishes and sound of cutlery is heard. MARY and MILDRED are dining. Singing is heard from the court.*)

MARY. (*Off right*) Turn on the lights in the living room Rhoda. Mr. and Mrs. Beecher are

coming over. They may be here at any moment.

(RHODA enters. *She listens to the quartette, then turns up light. She starts back to dining room.*)

RHODA. Why don't you eat something.

MARY. (*Off*) I'm not hungry, Rhoda.

MILDRED. (*Off*) This chicken is lovely.

(*The door-bell in the hallway rings.*)

MARY. (*Off*) See who that is—Rhoda——

(RHODA comes from dining room, goes into hallway and opens the door.)

MILDRED. (*Off*) Maybe it's Tommy. (*Peeps through curtains*)

(*At end of hallway the voices of MR. and MRS. BEECHER are heard greeting RHODA and RHODA'S voice in reply—then the outside door closes and all come down the hallway, in general conversation. MILDRED disappointed retires from the curtains.*)

RHODA. Set down please. (*Going right*) Mis' Alden, heah's Mr. Beecher an' his lady. (*She goes into dining room*)

MARY. (*Off*) Oh!! Yes—I'm so glad. (MARY comes in from dining room) Good evening.

BEECHER. Good evening.

MRS. BEECHER. How are you this evening, dear?

MARY. Oh splendid—so glad you've come in.

MRS. BEECHER. Are we early?

MARY. No, we're late. Mr. Alden hasn't come home yet. He's delayed down town, on business. We waited for him until after seven, so we're just eating dinner——

MRS. BEECHER. Oh, please don't let us interrupt—go on and finish your dinner——

MARY. We won't be long—and Mr. Alden is

sure to be home soon. Sure you don't mind waiting——

MRS. BEECHER. Of course not. I'll be glad to have a tete-a-tete with my husband. (*Laughing*) I see so little of him at home, you know.

(BEECHER *glances at her.*)

MARY. You can smoke if you like Mr. Beecher. Just make yourselves comfortable. (MARY *goes into dining room*)

(MRS. BEECHER *gives BEECHER a meaning glance.*)

MRS. BEECHER. (*Sarcastically*) Late.

BEECHER. Well, what of it?

MRS. BEECHER. Of course it's none of our business, but I don't suppose he'll feel like playing five hundred, when he *does* get home.

BEECHER. What's the use of saying a rotten thing like that?

MRS. BEECHER. Well, I always know what to expect when *you're* late.

BEECHER. Cut that out, will you. Alden doesn't drink a drop. (*He sits in chair by extreme left facing Mrs. Beecher*)

MRS. BEECHER. Isn't that nice—and so different. (*Seated on end of couch*)

BEECHER. Well, why should he? His wife is a bully little woman. (MRS. BEECHER *bridles*) And he's got a nice comfortable home.

MRS. BEECHER. I suppose you're trying to imply that *I* drive you to drink. And how easy it is to pull the wool over a man's eyes. His wife seems lovely to *you*, but if you knew what *I* know—(*Shakes her head*) Stingy?—Oh dreadful—And she's so dowdy. She never spends a penny on herself. But I suppose that's a virtue in your eyes. You'd like me to wear calico—And I

don't see anything so wonderful about the Alden home. I think this room is in wretched taste.

BEECHER. (*Stretching out*) Well, it's comfortable.

MRS. BEECHER. Perhaps if you gave me as much money, as Mr. Alden gives his wife——

BEECHER. There you go—money, money, money,—can't you ever think of anything but money?

MRS. BEECHER. Can't you think of it once in a while?

BEECHER. I'm not allowed to think of anything else.

MRS. BEECHER. I never have *enough*.

BEECHER. You couldn't *get* enough.

MRS. BEECHER. The idea of your losing all your winnings to-day.

BEECHER. Do you suppose I lost purposely?

MRS. BEECHER. I told you that you'd lose. Why didn't you give it to me?

BEECHER. I wanted a run for my money.

MRS. BEECHER. When you married me, you promised I should have everything I want.

BEECHER. Well, I didn't know you'd want the earth.

MRS. BEECHER. I'm growing tired of it Harvey. If you can waste money at the races, you can give me enough to make a decent appearance.

BEECHER. Wait till we get home—will you?

MRS. BEECHER. No I won't. When we get home, you'll sit down with a paper, and if I dare to speak to you, you'll say "huh" and snarl at me, and if I insist on talking you'll go out and leave me all alone. This is a good chance, and I'm going to take advantage of it.

BEECHER. Now, there's no use asking me for money to-night. I haven't any—but I'll give you some to-morrow.

MRS. BEECHER. (*Rises and walks centre, disgusted*) To-morrow never comes. At least, it

never brings money with it. (*Turns back*) What did Alden want with you last night?

BEECHER. Oh a little business matter.

MRS. BEECHER. (*Approaching him*) Don't you go buying any land through him. My Uncle Bob bought a lot from a real estate agent once—and he found it ran up a hill—like this. It was so steep—a house would roll right off it.

BEECHER. I'm not going to buy anything from him.

MRS. BEECHER. Well if you sell him anything be sure you get your money. Now *I* need money for

BEECHER. Don't talk so loud—they'll *hear* you.

MRS. BEECHER. Oh I don't care, if they *do*.

BEECHER. Well I do. Now shut up.

MRS. BEECHER. Harvey don't you speak to me like that. (*They argue a moment ad lib.* MARY comes from the dining room. MRS. BEECHER instantly becomes suave and sweet) Oh, dear Mrs. Alden surely you haven't finished your dinner!

MARY. (*Right*) I do hope you're not tired of waiting.

MRS. BEECHER. (*Going to her*) Oh not at all. Not in the least. Don't let us hurry you through your dinner.

BEECHER. No, don't hurry on our account. We're doing nicely.

MRS. BEECHER. I'm afraid I shall have to be jealous. Mr. Beecher likes it so much better here than he does at home. But then I suppose it's quite natural. You have such a dear little place.

(MILDRED comes from dining room.)

MILDRED. Good evening. (MR. and MRS. BEECHER return her greetings) Awfully glad you came in. I know I don't play as well as Lew does, but I'll take a hand till he comes.

MARY. Where did you leave the cards Mildred?

MILDRED. In the bookcase. (*She goes in rear room*) Will you turn on this light for me, Mr. Beecher.

BEECHER. Certainly. (*He goes into rear room, and turns on light over table, centre*)

(MRS. BEECHER follows.)

MRS. BEECHER. (*To MILDRED*) I wish you'd teach me how to get him to do things. He never thinks of helping me.

(BEECHER glowers at her—uncomfortably.)

MARY. (*Brings cards from bookcase*) Here are the cards. (*Puts them on table, then she goes up and looks out of hall door*)

(BEECHER takes them. RHODA appears from dining room.)

RHODA. (*To MARY, who comes down hallway—right*) I done put Mr. Alden's dinner in de oven to keep it hot——

MARY. Thank you, Rhoda—that's right.

RHODA. (*Looking keenly at MARY*) What y'all so worried about, Mis' Mary?

MARY. I'm not worried—Rhoda.

RHODA. Yassum. Yo' sho' is. Yo' hands is jes' tremblin' an' yo' ain't got no appetite. Now don't yo' fret. Nothin' ain' gwine to happen to Mr. Alden. He'll be 'long home.

MARY. Yes, yes, of course.

MRS. BEECHER. (*At piano. To MILDRED*) Oh my dear. (*Elevator door off*) Do you mind if I play this? (*Indicates a piece of music*) The orchestra played it last night. I think it's lovely.

(MRS. BEECHER plays softly. BEECHER sits back of table in rear room. Shuffles cards, and lays out a game of solitaire. Plays. There is a ring at the door. MARY goes to hallway. RHODA

quickly goes out in the hallway and opens door. The voices of RHODA and TOMMY HAZLETON are heard, in mutual greeting.)

MARY. Oh, it's you, Mr. Hazleton—come in.
(TOMMY HAZLETON *comes in from the hallway*)
So glad to see you.

TOM. Company?

MARY. Mr. and Mrs. Beecher.

TOM. Oh. (*He looks into rear room*) Good evening, everybody.

(MR. and MRS. BEECHER *greet him pleasantly and MILDRED smiles and nods at him.*)

MARY. Did you see anything of Lew downtown?

TOM. I saw him this morning—we had a little business together. But sit down. (*To the others*) Excuse me. I've some good news for you. I saw a bully little place over on Long Island to-day.

(*She sits in chair right. He brings down a light chair and sits by her.*)

MARY. Oh—tell me about it.

TOM. It's a stucco house. Eight rooms, almost new. Two miles from town on a good road.

MARY. And is there some land?

TOM. About twenty acres—and chickens—oh, you never saw such chickens in your life.

MARY. How many?

TOM. Well—I should say about—three million. (*Both laugh*) It's a chicken farm. The owner must sell, quick. His wife is—delicate. They think she'll do better in the Southwest—

MARY. Oh, poor woman. How she must hate to give up her little home.

TOM. Here's a photograph of the place. (*He gives a picture to MARY, and she studies it*

dreamily) It's a bargain at eight thousand. Fifteen hundred down and the rest on a six per cent mortgage.

MARY. Chickens and all?

TOM. Yes. But you'll have to make up your mind quick. Two or three people have been to see it.

MARY. I should love to have it. If Lew—were willing. I can't say positively until I've had a talk with him. Oh, I wish—He'll be home soon.

TOM. If you like I'll take you and Lew out to look at it to-morrow.

MARY. I hope he can go. I hope I can persuade him. It must be lovely out there now.

TOM. Prettiest little place you ever saw.

(MILDRED leaves Mrs. BEECHER and goes left by desk.)

MILDRED. (*To TOM*) So glad you came in.

MARY. You mustn't go without seeing Lew. (*She joins the BEECHERS*) Can't I get you something. A glass of beer?

MRS. BEECHER. Thanks; it's so warm.

MARY. It's on the ice, Mr. Beecher?

BEECHER. Not just now, thank you.

MRS. BEECHER. First time I ever knew Harvey to refuse. (*She laughs sarcastically and goes out into dining room with Mrs. ALDEN*)

(TOMMY stands right and MILDRED left. They look up at BEECHER in little alcove room playing solitaire, who is unconscious of the fact that they wish to be alone. TOMMY signals to MILDRED to get BEECHER away. She shakes her head in refusal. TOMMY walks up to the table in the alcove room, picks up a deck of cards and runs his finger over the end loudly. BEECHER looks up. He catches TOM's eye. He glances at MILDRED. TOMMY and MILDRED

stand quite still. BEECHER quietly gets up and goes off in the dining room.)

MRS. BEECHER. (*Off right*) Changed your mind, eh?

BEECHER. (*Off right*) I will have a glass if you don't mind Mrs. Alden.

MARY. (*Off right*) Here's a glass.

TOM. (*Looks at MILDRED's hand*) Well, I see you got it off.

MILDRED. Yes. My knuckle almost came with it. (*Left*)

TOM. I'm going to put a plain gold band on this finger, and you'll never get it off. (*He touches her ring finger*)

MILDRED. I'm not so sure, Tommy. I haven't made up my mind. I want time to think things over. Oh, such a lot of time. (*She moves chair down from desk and sits left*)

TOM. Take all the time you want. I'll come around again to-morrow night—if you say so. (*He sits on couch facing her*)

MILDRED. Tommy—what is your idea of marriage?

TOM. (*Smiles*) “Two souls with but a single thought, two hearts that beat as one.” I think that's pretty good for a real estate man.

MILDRED. (*Thoughtfully*) Is it always like that?

TOM. (*Tenderly*) It would be like that with us, little girl.

MILDRED. (*Practically*) It isn't like that—with Mr. Beecher.

TOM. Beecher—oh, no, that's different.

MILDRED. It isn't like that with Mrs. Beecher.

TOM. But they're always squabbling about money.

MILDRED. That's just it. Money seems to have a lot to do with marriage.

TOM. Money has *quite a lot* to do with it. But don't let's talk about *that*—(*He takes her hand*)

MILDRED. Why not? If money is such an important part of marriage, it ought to be talked about.

TOM. Let me remind you. This is a proposal; not a Director's Meeting.

MILDRED. Well—go on—propose some more—I don't mind—but tell me something of the future you have planned—tell me of the life you hope to lead—with your wife——

TOM. I'll try. I'm not rich; you know that. (*She nods*) But I've got ambition. I'm willing to work—I know how to save. We can have a nice home—like this—I don't gamble. I take a drink when I want it—but I don't want it too often——

MILDRED. (*Demurely*) I suppose you can bring references from your last employer to prove all these nice things that you say about yourself. (*Both laugh*) You're a nice boy—or I wouldn't let you sit here—and hold my hand. You're a sensible boy. You show it by saying you like me. (*Both laugh*) But leaving out your alluring description of your personal attractions: what is your *ideal* of married life?

TOM. I think it's a man's job to get something worth while to do—do it the best he can—and try to deserve a good woman. It's up to him to see that his wife gets all the good out of life that he can give her. I think the woman's work is to make a home—and keep a home.

MILDRED. Men usually think that way—don't they?

TOM. I suppose they do. It's the right way.

MILDRED. It's the *usual* way.

TOM. I suppose it isn't a perfect scheme, but it's the best we know.

MRS. BEECHER. (*Off*) Harvey, are you going to have another bottle?

BEECHER. Yes, I'm going to have another bottle.

MILDRED. (*Glancing at the BEECHERS*) But, Tommy, it doesn't *work*.

TOM. *Sometimes* it doesn't work. Of course if a fellow is a simp, and his wife's a nut—*nothing* would work.

MILDRED. It seems so unfair to the woman. She must be content with what her husband is willing to give her.

TOM. A man who loves a woman will give her all he can.

MILDRED. (*Lightly*) Yes. But people *always* start, loving each other. I suppose those two did. I suppose he was good to her once. (*Nods at the BEECHERS*) But *now*: if he gives her five cents, to buy an ice cream cone, she's lucky.

TOM. The other extreme is just as bad. I know a two-by-four manakin that turns in his salary every Saturday night to a loving helpmate. She gives him lunch in a basket and allows him ten cents a day for carfare—when he takes a glass of beer he has to walk to Harlem—147th Street——

MILDRED. I don't mean to take extremes. Just ordinary married people. They *do* have so much trouble about money.

TOM. Not real people. But here's Lew Alden, and your sister——

MILDRED. (*She turns away. Rather grave*) Yes. My sister, and her husband——

TOM. See how well they get on. They love each other. They've been married for years. They've made it work, Mildred.

MILDRED. Have they?

TOM. You live here with them. You ought to know. Why Lew Alden is one of the happiest men alive. (*Curiously*) What's the matter, Mildred? What's gone wrong? Last night you were on the point of saying—yes—but now——

MILDRED. Now—I'm—afraid.

TOM. (*Sadly*) I'm afraid, too—Mildred—afraid you don't care for me—(*He rises and turns up stage*)

MILDRED. Oh, but I *do*—(*He eagerly turns back—moving the chair which is in his way—back to the desk*) Now I didn't mean to say that. (*She evades his demonstrations*) Don't. They'll see you.

TOMMY. (*Going centre*) Why don't they have doors in these flats?

MILDRED. Tommy—if two business men were going into partnership—for five years, they would have a clear agreement. (*She is centre with him*)

TOM. You've been driving at something all evening and—(*He taps his forehead*) Solid ivory—don't understand. Don't beat about the bush—tell me plainly—what—is it?

MILDRED. Tommy—married people have trouble about money, all married people. No matter how much two people think of each other, I don't think it's wise for them to marry until they've agreed on some way to share their income, so the wife will not learn to hate marriage; because she is dependent.

TOM. That sounds to me just a little bit—mercenary.

MILDRED. (*Hurt*) Oh. I'm sorry. (*She walks away from him toward left*)

TOM. (*Follows her*) Don't be angry—I didn't mean to hurt you—

MILDRED. Mercenary? It's a thing that's got to be settled sometime—why not settle it—before it causes pain and bitterness.

TOM. (*Moodily*) I'm sorry you don't trust me.

(MRS. BEECHER *comes from the room at back and joins MILDRED.*)

MRS. BEECHER. (*To TOM*) Will you excuse me a moment, Mr. Hazleton. (*He goes up left. To MILDRED*) Oh, my dear, I'm so sorry that I wasn't

able to give you that three dollars, this morning, as I promised.

MILDRED. Oh—any time.

MRS. BEECHER. But, you see, I couldn't get a cent out of Harvey because he was determined to play a sure thing to-day—and of course he lost. I took his spring overcoat down to the pawnshop, but the man wouldn't let me have three dollars on it.

MILDRED. Oh, it doesn't matter.

(MARY comes from the dining room and joins them.

BEECHER also comes in and goes to card-table.)

MARY. Mildred will you play until Lew comes?

MILDRED. Yes. (*She goes into alcove room*)

MRS. BEECHER. (*To MARY*) Oh, Mrs. Alden, if my husband asks you what you pay your butcher for sirloin steak, will you tell him thirty-five cents a pound? (*Both are well down*)

MARY. But I only pay thirty-two.

MRS. BEECHER. Yes, I know; that's what I pay, really; but you see my butcher is very obliging and puts thirty-five on the bill and he always charges for a little more than I have, then after Harvey has paid the bill at the end of the month, I go see the butcher and he always makes it right.

MARY. That's very nice of him.

MRS. BEECHER. Now for Heaven's sake don't forget it because Harvey is always prying into things. Isn't it dreadful, how suspicious these husbands are; and if he should ask you how much you have for your family, tell him four pounds—he'll never know the difference and he'll believe *you*. You've no idea what an awful difficulty I'm in. I owe my dressmaker over a hundred dollars and I haven't an idea where I'm going to get the money to pay her.

MARY. (*Steadily*) If I were you, Mrs. Beecher, I would sell some jewelry. For instance—your

solitaire. (*She points to ring on MRS. BEECHER'S finger*)

MRS. BEECHER. Oh, my dear, I have sold it. That's paste. (*Elevator door off*) I let it go over a year ago, and I'm so afraid that Harvey will find it out.

(*The outer hallway door opens and ALDEN comes in quickly.*)

ALDEN. (*As he comes down the hall*) Did you think I was never coming? Sorry I'm so late.

MARY. Oh, I'm so glad you're home. (*ALDEN comes into room and she goes to him eagerly*) Is—everything—all right—tell me—tell me.

ALDEN. (*Looks at her in wonder*) Why, of course—everything's all right. (*He gently puts MARY from him, nods to MILDRED, then speaks to MRS. BEECHER*) I am sorry to hold up the game. I hope you and Mr. Beecher haven't grown tired of waiting.

MRS. BEECHER. Oh, not at all. Beecher has been playing solitaire. He loves solitaire. That's all he plays at home.

ALDEN. Hello, Beecher. Hello, Tommy.

BEECHER. Hullo. (*Goes on with his game*)

TOM. I'll bet you've been in the subway. You look it.

(*MARY, who has been standing still, reels slightly and puts out a hand in a groping way.*)

MILDRED. (*Sees this*) Mary. What's the matter? (*Goes to her*) It's the heat.

(*MARY sits in chair right. MRS. BEECHER stands right of chair, MILDRED is back of her and LEW on the left.*)

MRS. BEECHER. Poor dear. She's been worry-

ing. I know just how she feels. (*With a glance at BEECHER*)

ALDEN. Why, I'm often late——

MILDRED. There are so many accidents—(*She goes into dining room*)

BEECHER. Give her air. (*Pulls curtains from window*)

MARY. There's nothing the matter. (*Trying to pull herself together*) Really. (*With a slight touch of hysteria*) Ha, ha. (*She wipes her eyes*) So silly of me. Please don't pay any attention.

(*MILDRED comes back with water.*)

MILDRED. She's been worrying about some business affair——

ALDEN. (*To MARY*) Well, if it's going to affect you this way—I'll never tell you another word, about business.

MRS. BEECHER. That's just what Mr. Beecher says.

MILDRED. You're all upset, dear. Why don't you go in your room—and lie down?

MARY. Oh, no. (*Gains control of herself*) I am all right now. (*To the others*) I suppose you think I'm awfully foolish——

MRS. BEECHER. Oh, no—perfectly natural. You really ought to lie down and rest a little while. (*MARY starts to protest*) If only a few moments. Come along—do, and I'll fan you—(*Taking her*)

MARY. (*To LEW*) But everything is all right now?

ALDEN. Of course. Things have gone—splendidly. Everything is all right.

(*MARY goes out relieved with MRS. BEECHER.*)

MILDRED. Have you had your dinner—Lew?

ALDEN. I've been too busy to eat.

MILDRED. (*Calling right*) Rhoda. (RHODA appears, right) Mr. Alden has come home. Will you please give him his dinner.

RHODA. Yassum. But de chicken is dry as a bone an' de ice cream all got soft. (*She goes out*)

MILDRED. (*To three men*) Excuse me. (*Follows RHODA out*)

BEECHER. (*Coming down*) Poor little woman. That's what she's been worrying about. I knew something was the matter, but I didn't know what it was.

ALDEN. (*Crosses to centre*) Well, she needn't worry. I swung the whole deal. Put it through clear and clean. Thanks to you fellows. I couldn't have made it without your help.

BEECHER. (*Right of LEW*) (*Looking uneasily after his wife*) Not so loud——

TOM. (*Left of LEW*) So you bought the factory site all right, eh?

ALDEN. Bought it, yes—this morning—and sold it, this afternoon.

TOM. Hooray. Tell me about it——

ALDEN. As soon as I cleaned up on the purchase, I telephoned the Power Company. Made a quick deal—cleared four thousand dollars. Tommy, you're a brick; Beecher, I can never thank you enough.

BEECHER. (*Looking off right uneasily*) S-s-sh. This is between ourselves.

TOM. Are you in on this, too?

ALDEN. In? He let me have two thousand dollars last night. (TOMMY stares—incredulously) Now I want to show you chaps how grateful I am. Tommy, here's your check for the eight hundred you loaned me. (*Gives him a check*)

TOM. Hold on, Lew, this is for a thousand.

ALDEN. Your end of the profit. (TOMMY starts to protest) Now, shut up; take it. (*Gives BEECHER check*) And here's your loan to me.

BEECHER. (*Fumbling for note in his pocket*) Twenty-five hundred. (*Embarrassed*) Oh, no—really—I can't take this, old man.

ALDEN. Of course you can. You must. Now I insist. It's coming to you. You don't know what a friend you've been to me, Beecher; I'm awfully grateful.

(*He puts the check in BEECHER'S hand and takes his note from BEECHER. At the same time MRS. BEECHER comes from right.*)

MRS. BEECHER. Mrs. Alden is better now.

(*BEECHER quickly pockets the check. She notes this.*)

MILDRED. (*Appears right*) Come to your dinner, Lew.

ALDEN. (*To MR. and MRS. BEECHER*) You'll excuse me a little while—won't you—I haven't had a bite since breakfast——

BEECHER. Certainly; go on, and eat your dinner.

(*ALDEN goes out right. TOMMY goes right following LEW and stops by MILDRED. BEECHER uneasily goes up into alcove room. MRS. BEECHER follows him—determined.*)

TOM. (*Aside to MILDRED*) Put on your hat and we'll go over and stroll on Riverside Drive.

MILDRED. (*To TOM. Indicates the BEECHERS*) I can't leave company.

TOM. (*To the BEECHERS*) Miss Carr—and I have an engagement; do you mind if we run along?

MRS. BEECHER. Why, of course not—though we're sorry to lose you.

MILDRED. We're late now. Sure you won't mind

BEECHER. Not at all.

(MR. and MRS. BEECHER *have ad lib. with TOM and MILDRED and insist that they go.*)

— MILDRED. So sorry to run away—like this. Good night.

TOM. Good night.

MR. & MRS. BEECHER. Good night.

(TOM and MILDRED *go out, outer hall*)

BEECHER. (*Looking after them*) I suppose she's going to marry him.

MRS. BEECHER. Yes. Poor girl. (BEECHER *glares at her angrily*) Oh, by the way, are you mixed up in some kind of a deal with Alden?

BEECHER. No.

MRS. BEECHER. Then why was he shaking hands with you so gratefully, and telling you how much he thinks of you?

BEECHER. (*Trying to appear unconcerned*) Oh, I gave him a little information.

MRS. BEECHER. You *gave* it to him. No wonder we're poor—Didn't he make it worth your while?

BEECHER. (*Left centre*) Oh, it wasn't—worth much.

MRS. BEECHER. (*Right centre*) He gave you a check.

BEECHER. No, he didn't.

MRS. BEECHER. Yes, he did. I saw him.

BEECHER. (*Sourly*) Well, what of it?

MRS. BEECHER. Well, why didn't you say so in the first place? Why did you hide it from me?

BEECHER. (*Suppressed anger*) For the simple reason that it wasn't any of your business. (*He goes left*) This is entirely between Alden and myself—I've a right to keep my business to myself.

MRS. BEECHER. Then what did you marry me for—You keep your affairs to yourself, tight

enough; and you keep all the money to yourself.

BEECHER. (*Uneasily*) Dry up; they'll hear you.

MRS. BEECHER. Of course you don't want any one to know how you mistreat me—but you've got to listen. You can't howl at me here—and shut me up—or threaten me as you do at home—and I'm going to speak my mind. You've got money—in your pocket—and I want some.

BEECHER. There's not enough to satisfy you—it's a little check.

MRS. BEECHER. How much is it? Let me see. (*Tries to get check*)

BEECHER. No, I'm damned—if I do. (*Pushes her hands aside*)

MRS. BEECHER. Harvey, don't you swear at me. We're not at home; and I won't stand it. Now I want some of that money.

BEECHER. (*Left*) Now for once in your life be sensible. I'm telling you the truth. I can't give you any of this money—it's a loan.

MRS. BEECHER. Oh, you *borrowed* it—from him.

BEECHER. No; last night I borrowed it—for him—and he just paid me back.

MRS. BEECHER. Well, if you can borrow money to give a strange man, you can borrow some for *me*—What right have you to borrow money—to lend him?

BEECHER. Oh, it's—it's a business deal.

MRS. BEECHER. (*She throws herself angrily to a seat on the couch*) Another long shot, I suppose. (*Scornfully*) A business deal. Can't you tell a better lie than that? Borrowed money? *You*. Why your credit is nearly as bad as mine and I'm ashamed to look the grocer in the face—Who did you borrow it from?

BEECHER. That is none of your business.

MRS. BEECHER. Of course not. I'm only your wife. (*Sniffles*) You stingy thing.

BEECHER. For God's sake, now, don't make a scene.

MRS. BEECHER. It's all your fault—If you'd only treat me with a little consideration——

BEECHER. Stop it, I tell you. They'll think I've been abusing you.

MRS. BEECHER. (*Tearful and angry*) You have—and I won't stand it. Do you hear. I'm going home. (*She goes up, he follows, she turns on him*) You can stay, and play cards with your friends—the Aldens, if you like. I don't care what you do—(*Going*) See if you can find some kind of a lie to tell them about me when I'm gone.

(*She angrily goes into hall—then the outer door slams. BEECHER stands looking after her undecided and uncomfortable. MARY comes in from right.*)

BEECHER. I hope you're feeling better.

MARY. Oh, I'm quite all right, now. (*She looks about*) Where's Mrs. Beecher?

BEECHER. Mrs. Beecher—thought—that we had better not play cards to-night—and she's gone home.

MARY. Oh, I'm so sorry. (*She sits in arm-chair, right*)

BEECHER. Yes, she was quite concerned about you—and she said she thought you would feel better if you were quiet—she asked me to make our excuses, and say we'll come over—some other evening.

MARY. Oh, I'm so sorry I've spoiled your evening.

BEECHER. Oh, don't mention it—not at all—We'll just have—a quiet evening at home—that is, I may go out—but I hope you'll soon feel yourself—And by the way. (*He lowers his voice*) Things have turned out splendidly. Mr. Alden not only saved his investment but his deal went through to-day——

MARY. (*Overjoyed*) Oh!!! I am so glad—and I am so grateful to you.

BEECHER. There's the check. (*He endorses it and offers it to her*)

MARY. Oh, no. I can't take it—he would see my endorsement on the check when the bank returns it to him. Then he would know—don't you see?

BEECHER. Yes. That's so.

MARY. Deposit this check to your credit and give me your check.

BEECHER. I quite understand. (*He replaces the check in his pocket, sits at her desk—scribbles his own check*)

MARY. (*Looking over his shoulder*) But this is for two thousand, five-hundred dollars.

BEECHER. Yes. He insisted on giving me some of the profit because I helped him out, and I couldn't refuse.

(MRS. BEECHER *appears in her window across the court; she watches.* BEECHER *gives* MRS. ALDEN *check.*)

MRS. BEECHER. Harvey! Harvey Beecher! What are you doing? I saw you! What are you giving that woman money for? I saw you!

MARY. Oh! (*She looks and moves uneasily toward the right*)

BEECHER. (*Very angrily looks thro' window*) Shut up—will you?

MRS. BEECHER. (*Across the court*) No; I won't shut up. (BEECHER *motions her to be still*) No; I won't be still—

(BEECHER *angrily slams the window down. At the same time* ALDEN *comes in, from right, surprised and astonished.*)

ALDEN. What is it? What's the matter?

MARY. Oh, nothing. Nothing.

BEECHER. (*Very uneasily*) Mrs. Beecher isn't feeling well. She felt compelled to go home. If you'll excuse me—I will also say good night.

ALDEN. But won't you stay and have a game of

BEECHER. (*Very uneasily*) Oh, no. Not now. Another time. So sorry. Good night.

(MRS. BEECHER *in raging fury, opens the hall door and rushes into the room. All look at her surprised. MARY and BEECHER are discomfited.*)

MARY. Why did you give that woman money?
(*She points to MARY*)

BEECHER. (*Very sternly*) See here; I've had enough of this. Come home, and if there's anything you want to know I'll tell you there.

MRS. BEECHER. No; you'll tell me here. I'm not afraid of you, Harvey Beecher! I want to know what's going on between *you* and Mrs. Alden.

ALDEN. (*Sternly*) Why, what could go on between Mr. Beecher and Mrs. Alden?

(ALDEN *right. MRS. BEECHER up right centre. BEECHER centre. MARY left.*)

MRS. BEECHER. That's what I want to find out. I've been begging him for money. Begging! You understand? And he has none to give me. But he wrote a check for *her*. I saw him from the window. I want to know why he wrote that check. I want to know why he *gives her money!*

BEECHER. That isn't true.

MRS. BEECHER. It is true.

BEECHER. Nothing of the kind. (*To ALDEN*) I was explaining to Mrs. Alden why Mrs. Beecher went home—I was apologizing. Then we spoke of your business deal. I was trying to reassure her.

She has been greatly worried about it. So I showed her the check you gave me.

MRS. BEECHER. Oh, yes—but you wouldn't show it to *me*.

BEECHER. Then it just occurred to me—I would endorse it—and I sat down at the desk by the window—and endorsed it. (*Pulls check from pocket*) Here it is. (*Holds it out to ALDEN.* MRS. BEECHER *tries to snatch it, but he quickly puts it in his pocket*) I'm going to mail it to my bank to-night. Mrs. Beecher saw Mrs. Alden and me through the window—and misconstrued the whole matter—very foolishly made a scene—I'm d—d sorry old man

MARY. Don't you see, Lew—that was the way of it. (*Humiliated*) You understand now—don't you, Mrs. Beecher.

(MRS. BEECHER *sneers*)

ALDEN. (*Going to MARY*) Then Mr. Beecher wasn't giving you money?

MARY. Lew—why—should Mr. Beecher give me money?

BEECHER. Yes. Why should I give Mrs. Alden money?

ALDEN. And it's all a ridiculous mistake?

MARY. Of course. (*She goes to him, and he slips an arm about her*)

BEECHER. What else could it be? (*He tries to laugh uneasily*)

MRS. BEECHER. Do you believe that idiotic story?

ALDEN. I believe what my wife tells me.

BEECHER. Now apologize—go on—square yourself.

MRS. BEECHER. Apologize—Never. Not till this matter is explained to me.

MARY. Mrs. Beecher, the only thing to be said is—good night.

BEECHER. Certainly. Come on, let's go home. (*Trying to urge her*) When you're willing to listen to reason, I'll explain the whole thing.

MRS. BEECHER. (*To BEECHER*) No. (*She sits*) I'm not going home. (*To MARY*) You can't get rid of me so easily.

ALDEN. (*Sternly*) Good night, Mrs. Beecher

MRS. BEECHER. Oh, you can let them pull the wool over your eyes if you like. They're both lying—I'll *prove* it to you *now*. My husband wrote a check for Mrs. Alden. (I saw him tear it out of his check-book.) He gave it to her. She tucked it in the bosom of her dress. (*MARY unconsciously puts her hands on the bosom of her dress. As Lew looks at her, her hands move away*) She's got it there now. Ask Beecher to show you his check book. He always puts down every check he draws. I've looked at his book when he's asleep——

MARY. Lew, don't pay any attention—the woman is—is mad.

ALDEN. Now, Beecher, we can clear up the whole thing. Show me your check-book and Mrs. Beecher will be satisfied.

BEECHER. (*Frankly*) I haven't my check-book with me, Alden——

(*MRS. BEECHER has slipped up close to him and suddenly plunges her hand in his pocket and drags out check-book.*)

MRS. BEECHER. Oh, hasn't he? (*BEECHER takes it from her. He puts it in his pocket*) Oh, you brute—you hurt my hand. (*To ALDEN*) There's the check-book. (*To BEECHER*) Show it to him—I dare you—go on.

ALDEN. Do you care to show it to me, Beecher?

BEECHER. Isn't my assurance—my word good enough for you. Why it's like searching a man's pockets.

MRS. BEECHER. Don't you see—he's afraid——

ALDEN. Mary—did Mr. Beecher give you a check? (*Left centre*)

MARY. Yes. (*MARY standing with her back to the audience*)

MRS. BEECHER. There. You see? They've been lying—*now* we'll get the truth.

ALDEN. He gave you a check?

MARY. Yes.

ALDEN. What for?

MARY. I can't tell you.

ALDEN. You must.

MARY. (*Doggedly*) I can't tell you.

ALDEN. Give it to me——

MARY. No.

ALDEN. You won't give it to me?

MARY. No.

ALDEN. You won't let me see it?

MARY. You must trust me.

ALDEN. Trust you—my God—And you—and he—have lied and lied—and lied. What does it mean—why are you ashamed—or afraid—to tell me—why Beecher gave you money?

MRS. BEECHER. (*Viciously*) I always had my suspicions it was *somebody*. I didn't know it was *you*. (*She moves up stage restlessly.*)

MARY. Oh—you—wretched—creature—you——

(*MRS. BEECHER is about to retort—BEECHER checks her.*)

BEECHER. For God's sake keep quiet—You've made trouble——

ALDEN. Beecher. Will *you* tell me why you gave my wife money?

BEECHER. Yes.

MRS. BEECHER. Now, we'll have more lies.

BEECHER. You insisted on my taking that *profit*—I don't want it. Don't think I was entitled to it—I just—gave it to *her*——

ALDEN. You gave five hundred dollars—to my wife?

MRS. BEECHER. Five hundred dollars to *her*: and I'm in *debt*.

BEECHER. (*Lamely*) Later she meant to give it to you—(*To LEW*)

MARY. (*Weeping—ashamed*) Oh, Lew, this is dreadful—it's horrible—nothing like this has ever happened in our lives. Send this woman away—let's just you and I talk it over. I can explain all to you—really, Lew—everything——

ALDEN. No—by God—here and now. There's been too much lying and evasion. I want the truth now—do you understand—the truth, from both of you—and I'm going to have it—or——

MARY. (*Seated on end of couch*) You shall have the truth, then. All this is my fault. Don't blame Mr. Beecher. He's been trying to help me. And trying to help you. He gave me a check—it was due me. It was for a loan.

ALDEN. A loan. *You* loaned Beecher money?

MARY. Yes. Yes.

ALDEN. When?

MARY. Last night.

ALDEN. Why didn't you tell me?

MRS. BEECHER. (*To BEECHER*) And why didn't you tell *me*?

MARY. It was a private matter between Mr. Beecher and myself.

MRS. BEECHER. Oh, *was* it. (*She goes across to right centre leaving BEECHER right*) I won't have my husband having secrets with other women about money—You could *loan him* money, but when I asked you for three dollars to pay the plumber——

BEECHER. So it was three dollars——

(*MRS. BEECHER goes up disconcerted.*)

ALDEN. How much did you lend Mr. Beecher?

MARY. Not much—all I had.

ALDEN. Was this before I came home?

MARY. No.

ALDEN. After?

MARY. Yes.

ALDEN. Why didn't you ask *me*, Beecher?

BEECHER. Mrs. Alden will tell you.

ALDEN. (*Fiercely*) You tell me——

MARY. No. I'll tell you——

ALDEN. (*Puts her aside and confronts BEECHER*)
No. Last night you borrowed money from my wife—you both kept it a secret—then you turn around—and lend two thousand dollars to me.

MRS. BEECHER. Two thousand dollars—When did *you* get two thousand dollars?

ALDEN. Don't you see how idiotic that sounds. Don't you see how it looks.

MARY. But it's true, Lew. It's true. You must *believe* me.

BEECHER. This is rotten. I've had enough. (*He goes up to right centre by hallway arch*)

ALDEN. Hold on Beecher. You can't go yet—(*Follow him*)

BEECHER. (*Angrily—turns*) See here, Alden—you can't keep me if I don't want to stay——

ALDEN. I'll try. (*Faces BEECHER in a threatening manner*)

MARY. (*Frightened*) Oh, no, no, for God's sake—Here's the check he gave me. (*Shows ALDEN check*)

ALDEN. (*Reads check*) Two thousand five hundred dollars. (*To MARY*) What did you lend him?

MARY. Two thousand dollars.

ALDEN. Why did you loan him two thousand dollars——

MARY. So he could lend it to you.

BEECHER. Don't you see, Alden—it was *her* money that pulled you through to-day. (*To MRS. BEECHER—sarcastically*) Come on. (*Urging her toward hallway. They go out*)

HER OWN MONEY.

(6)

ALDEN. (*To MARY*) Your money?

MARY. Mine.

THE CURTAIN BEGINS TO FALL SLOWLY.

It was my money that saved you, Lew. (*She advances toward him, but he looks at her in a cold fury. She continues to try to explain*) I meant to tell you—don't you understand—I wanted to help you——

THE CURTAIN FALLS ON THE FIRST
SCENE OF THE SECOND ACT.

SCENE SECOND.

SCENE:—*The same apartment an hour later. The curtain rises. MILDRED'S key is heard in the lock. The door opens. MILDRED comes in. TOM stands uncertainly in the hall.*

MILDRED. (*Formally*) Won't you come in?

TOM. (*Dryly*) Thanks. (*He comes in, closes door, and follows MILDRED down*)

MILDRED. (*Formally*) Sit down. (*She slowly takes off gloves c.*)

TOM. (*Sits right, then looks at watch*) Why come home at nine o'clock? We can fight just as well in the street.

MILDRED. (*Icily*) I don't care to "fight" anywhere. (*She looks uneasily at back room and discovers it is empty*) The Beechers must have gone home——

TOM. (*Goes to her, centre*) See here, little girl; we've been playing at cross purposes all evening. I wish you'd tell me just what you want.

MILDRED. I want you to be reasonable.

TOM. Reasonable. You mean you want me to say I agree with you—when I *don't*.

MILDRED. No, but you won't be serious. You insist on treating me like a child. I've been trying to explain my point of view to you—and you go right on basing everything on your own.

TOM. I'm doing the best I can to get on a working basis. What do you want to know? I've told you my salary—I've told you how much I've saved—

MILDRED. *That isn't it—It wouldn't make a bit of difference to me if you hadn't saved a dollar—*

TOM. You don't think you could trust me—

MILDRED. Oh, yes, I know I could Tommy, if you'd see things the right way—and say the right thing.

TOM. All right, what is the right thing? I'll say it—

MILDRED. I can't *tell* you.

TOM. You can't tell me? Then how do you expect me to know what to say?

MILDRED. It must come from yourself. You must think of it.

TOM. Let me get this right. You're not going to marry me until I convince myself that I'm wrong, and say something that I don't seem to be able to think of, now, and you can't tell me.

MILDRED. I'd tell you if I could. I can't.

TOM. It's perfectly clear.

MILDRED. You will think of it. You must. I know it will come to you because you're fair, and I know you want me to be happy.

TOM. I'll go home and think it over.

MILDRED. I hope—this hasn't spoiled your evening.

TOM. Oh, no. I'm as happy as a blind man at a moving picture show. Good-night.

MILDRED. Good-night. (*He goes out. RHODA dressed for the street, comes from right*) Are you going home, now, Rhoda?

RHODA. Yassum. Dinner dishes is all cleaned up.

MILDRED. I see. I suppose you've got to hurry along to get supper for Porter, eh?

RHODA. No, ma'am. I ain't married no mo'.

MILDRED. What's become of your husband?

RHODA. A year ago he done married another lady without tellin' me nothin' about it. I don't want him round no mo'. He never was no good anyhow. Always shootin' craps. I ain't gwine to get married agin—foh a while.

MILDRED. (*Looks in back room*) The Beechers must have gone home early.

RHODA. (*Mysteriously*) Yassum—Dey done gone home.

MILDRED. Is anything the matter?

RHODA. Mis' Alden, she's layin' down in her room, an' Mr. Alden, he's walkin' up and down in his room—a cussin'.

MILDRED. (*Distressed*) I wonder what's wrong?

RHODA. I dunno—I couldn't make head er tail of it from de kitchen—Ain't nothin' I kin do before I go—is they?

MILDRED. No thank you, Rhoda. (*RHODA turns out hall light*) Good-night.

RHODA. Good-night. (*RHODA goes quietly out. MARY comes from right and is apparently surprised to see MILDRED*)

MARY. I thought you and Tommy went for a walk.

MILDRED. We did. We had a scrap. He's gone home.

(*Through the window comes the voice of MRS.*

BEECHER. MARY listens distressed and MILDRED is astonished.)

MRS. BEECHER. Oh, I know what a perfectly lovely woman Mrs. Alden is. Butter wouldn't melt in her mouth. Just the same—if you ever speak to

her again—I won't shut up. I don't care if everybody in the house knows what I think of her——

MILDRED. (*Closing curtain on window*) Why did she say that—Have you had trouble?

MARY. Oh, dreadful—disgraceful. I'm so ashamed—everyone on the court heard it, of course.

MILDRED. Was it about cards?

MARY. I'll tell you all about it to-morrow. Not now—*please*.

MILDRED. Oh, Mary, dear, I'm so sorry. Can I do anything?

MARY. Nothing.

(ALDEN opens the door of his den in the hallway, right, and comes into the room. He is somewhat disheveled, but looks determined and stern.)

ALDEN. Mary and I have something to talk over Mildred—Run along, there's a good girl.

MILDRED. Of course. (*To MARY*) Good-night. Good-night, Lew.

ALDEN. Good-night. (*MARY sits in alcove room. LEW slowly crosses left*) We've got to talk this thing over. I want to know where I stand. Mary—you humiliated me to-night in a way that I can't understand—can never forget. I hardly feel that I can ever forgive it—but I'm going to try. I'm going to find out your reason—for you must have had a reason—you surely didn't do it wantonly——

MARY. No. God knows I didn't mean to hurt you, Lew. You know that. I wouldn't have done it for the world. Never since we've been married—has anything like this happened—it's terrible. It's hurt me—dreadfully.

(*The rancorous voice of MRS. BEECHER floats through the window.*)

MRS. BEECHER. Well, suppose I did lie to you

about the plumber's bill. Every woman lies to her husband. She has to; your fine Mrs. Alden lied to her husband——

ALDEN. That's a nice thing, isn't it? (*He goes right centre. MARY quickly goes to window and closes it*) Sure to give the neighbors a good opinion of us——

MARY. Don't listen—don't pay any attention. (*MARY left. LEW right centre*)

ALDEN. It seems you have—two thousand dollars.

MARY. Yes.

ALDEN. You've had it—for some time.

MARY. Yes.

ALDEN. And you never told me.

MARY. I never told you.

ALDEN. Why?

MARY. (*Very ill at ease*) I always meant to tell you—when the time came——

ALDEN. What time?

MARY. The time—when we were to use it——

ALDEN. Oh—we were to use it——

MARY. It was for *us*——

ALDEN. But you didn't think the time had come, last night?

MARY. No—I thought you'd be glad—proud of me, when I finally told you——

ALDEN. But you see—you didn't tell me—I found it out.

MARY. Because I helped you. Remember *that*—you're out of your difficulty——

ALDEN. You're not asking me to be grateful for that, are you? I'd rather have borrowed from any stranger. I'd rather have lost the money at stake—than to have had you do the rotten thing you did.

MARY. Lew—that's cruel—that's unjust.

ALDEN. Cruel? Why you *humiliated* me—before Beecher and his wife. You helped me, yes—and you did it in such a way that my only feeling is shame.

MARY. No. You're wrong. (*Kneeling on couch facing him—hands on table*) Mr. Beecher understands. I explained it to him.

ALDEN. Of course. (*He sits facing her*) Now I want you to explain it to *me*. You and Beecher conspired.

MARY. No, no. He only did—what I asked him.

ALDEN. Then this brilliant idea was all your own. I needed money. You had it. You didn't loan it to me. You loaned it to Beecher. *He* loaned it to me. God, what a fool he must have thought me, when I was thanking him—Well, why did you do it? Why didn't you loan the money to *me*?

MARY. Oh, I know now—that is what I should have done.

ALDEN. You must have had some kind of a reason. What was it?—What was your reason?

MARY. I thought you might feel more content to make a business arrangement with—another business man—I thought for me to loan it, might hurt your pride——

ALDEN. Is that what you told Beecher?

MARY. Yes—I told him that I had been opposed to this particular deal——

ALDEN. But you didn't know anything about it—Why should you lie to him?

MARY. (*Rising*) Lie—Oh, Lew——

ALDEN. It wasn't the truth—was it?

MARY. (*After a pause*) No. (*Turning away*)

ALDEN. Then, what was it? (*He waits. She does not answer*) For some reason—you deceived Beecher—for the same reason that you hid the thing from me. So you didn't want to hurt my pride? (*Scornfully*) My *pride*—you thought I wouldn't care if the Beechers knew I was short of money—and had made a fool deal I couldn't swing. You didn't think *that* would hurt my pride.

MARY. No, I didn't think—I admit it was thoughtless—(*In chair left*)

ALDEN. (*Firmly*) Mary, that isn't your reason. It doesn't sound straight. You know it—You know I won't stop until I find out. (*He approaches her and stands before her*) So tell me—*What—was—your—reason?* Were you afraid I'd take the money from you? Were you afraid you wouldn't get it back?

MARY. (*Looking up slowly. Faintly*) Yes.

ALDEN. What?

MARY. (*Desperately*) That's just it, Lew—I was afraid I wouldn't get it back.

ALDEN. That sounds like the truth at last.

MARY. It is the truth—Oh, Lew, don't let it hurt you.

ALDEN. Hurt? (*Walks away—up left, humiliated*) It would take a good deal to hurt me *now*—Were you afraid I would lose it?

MARY. So afraid—I thought it might be involved in a business deal—and left—tied up—in your business—but I knew if you borrowed money from Mr. Beecher—you would be sure to—repay it——

ALDEN. No quicker than I would have repaid you. (*He reaches chair from desk and sits facing her*) Have I ever taken money of yours—and refused to give it back—Have I?

MARY. Not refused—*neglected*.

ALDEN. Neglected—what do you mean?

MARY. I—I didn't mean to remind you of it—I wouldn't have spoken of it—but you made me, Lew—you *made* me.

ALDEN. (*In cold rage*) So that's what you're thinking of—that five hundred dollars you let me have—years ago.

MARY. Years ago——

ALDEN. But I've explained that to you twenty times—I never refused to pay you back—I've always regarded it as a loan, I always intended to pay—when convenient.

MARY. Yes—but it never was convenient. I

know you always meant to but you've never *done* it——

ALDEN. I always paid you the interest—just as I would have paid any business man—I was scrupulous—about it—but you know how my business is—I always need all the ready money I can get. You never asked me for it.

MARY. And if the two thousand had been swallowed up in your business I should always have hesitated to ask for that.

ALDEN. I see. (*He rises*) Well, you've explained. You don't trust me—but you trust Beecher—you thought I'd *take* your money——

MARY. Not *take* it—*lose* it——

ALDEN. Well, suppose I *had* lost it.

MARY. That's what I couldn't bear to face.

ALDEN. But wouldn't you rather have *lost* it than have this rotten thing happen?

MARY. (*Greatly agitated*) But, Lew, you don't understand—you don't realize—this money means so much to me.

ALDEN. It must. Where did you get it? (*Leaning over table*)

MARY. Saved it——

ALDEN. Saved it?

MARY. Out of what you gave me——

ALDEN. Then you didn't work for it—didn't *earn* it——

MARY. (*Excited and distressed*) Yes—I *earned* it. By the hardest work a woman has to do—and the worst paid—I watched the pennies—I haggled with tradesmen, I denied myself—I did without—(you will never appreciate the economies I practised—only a woman would understand)—it took me years—(*She goes up*)

ALDEN. But why scrape as if I stinted you—I didn't ask it. I've always given you everything in reason—if I should die—I carry a heavy life insurance—(*He goes right centre*)

MARY. (*She comes to him*) Oh, I had a reason. That's what I'm trying to explain. I have always wanted to live in the country. I've always wanted to own a home—our home—for you and me—It seemed that your work demanded—all your effort—and all your money so I thought—if I could save enough to start—I might persuade you to live out of town, if you thought it would make me happy—and to-day Tommy Hazelton found a place—Here is the picture. (*Shows him photograph*) I meant to surprise you to-night—I meant to talk it all over with you—and tell you I had the money—I thought you'd be so glad—so proud of me—fifteen hundred down—This evening I wrote a letter (*She shows him a letter in a light blue envelope*) to Tommy Hazleton, telling him we would see the place and—very likely—take it. I felt so sure you would—Read the letter I wrote to Tommy. Don't you see. It was all for us—and I meant to tell you to-night—

ALDEN. (*Impatiently*) I understand—never mind—

MARY. Don't you believe me?

ALDEN. I don't care. (*He drops letter on table*) It doesn't make any difference—I know where I stand. What I hate, about this, is your secrecy, your lack of trust in me. It was low—dishonorable. (*MARY becomes angry*) And it has made me suffer—

MARY. (*Angrily*) You, you, you, always you; you think of yourself. *Your* suffering, *your* humiliation—mine has been worse. Think of what I endured from Mrs. Beecher. All that you bear, I bear too and I feel that I brought it about through my thoughtlessness—

ALDEN. (*Furiously*) Thoughtlessness? Sneaky selfishness—

MARY. (*More angrily*) You shan't speak to me like that—I don't care what I've done I won't stand it. I've explained—and I've told you the truth—

I've tried to give my reasons—but your pride has been hurt—your vanity wounded—It doesn't make any difference to you that I am just torn to pieces about this—you can only see your side of it——

ALDEN. You haven't thought of anything but your money——

MARY. I tell you I was afraid you'd sink it in your business—your business—your business.

ALDEN. You seem to have a grudge against my business—it has meant as much to you as it has to me. If it wasn't for my business—and me—where would you be?

MARY. Making my own living I suppose.

ALDEN. You wouldn't find it easy.

MARY. I did it once——

ALDEN. You couldn't do it now.

MARY. I *could*—Do you want me to make my living again?

ALDEN. I'll see that you're taken care of. (*She looks at him curiously*) You got your money back—and the five hundred—back too—every cent of it. That's just like a woman to throw that up to me.

MARY. Just like a man to *keep* it.

ALDEN. You've written to Tommy Hazleton you say about the place. (*He carelessly handles letter*)

MARY. It was only to be if you wanted to—if you were willing——

ALDEN. I suppose that can be arranged, if you like,—on a business basis——

MARY. I don't quite understand—you say—the place—can be arranged.

ALDEN. If that's the way you want to live——

MARY. But you——

ALDEN. Leave me out of it—I don't count.

MARY. Oh, Lew, don't be so hard, so cold. Listen, Lew—I'll apologize—I'm sorry—I was wrong. I ask you to forgive me—I was wrong—I'm sorry. I've apologized—What more can I do?

ALDEN. There's nothing you can do—there's nothing to be done.

MARY. But things can't go on like this——

ALDEN. No. Not exactly like this—You've put things on a business basis. We'll keep them there.

MARY. Does it mean that we are no longer to be—husband and wife? Lew, you're not thinking of *that*?

ALDEN. No matter how long we live, things can never again be the same between us.

MARY. You mean you don't care for me any longer?

ALDEN. Would you expect me to go on caring for you, after a thing like this?

MARY. You don't—care—for me—any longer? But surely this one trouble hasn't killed all your affection?

ALDEN. It isn't this one trouble. It's what has gone before. Your loan to Beecher was no sudden, impulsive move. It was the result of secrecy, and concealment, which have gone on for years. You've been a long time hoarding that money. Every dollar is a doubt of me. All through our married life there's been fear and doubt—of me—and I never knew—Even when you told me you loved me—you were on your guard. The thing that hurts me is the fact that you don't *trust* me—that you have never *trusted* me. It isn't the Beecher affair that stings—it's the *years* of secrecy, the *years of mistrust*.

MARY. (*Dully*) What are you going to do? What do you want *me* to do—Do you want me—to—leave you?

LEW. (*Bitterly*) I'll save you the trouble.

MARY. My God how can you say such a thing to me?

LEWIS. Now I know the truth and it's worse than I thought. Your trust in me has gone—My affection has gone with it. I'm done.

MARY. Oh, Lew, what a terrible thing you're thinking of doing——

LEWIS. I'm done I tell you——

MARY. Oh, no, you'll think better of this to-morrow——

LEWIS. I'm going——

MARY. No——

LEWIS. Now——

MARY. Stay here and talk to me. Let me talk to you—(*She clings to him*) At least wait until to-morrow; give your anger a chance to cool. I know if you go away in this mood, you'll be—merciless—(*He tries to release himself from her but she clasps his hands*) Lew—dear—think of all the years we've been together.

LEWIS. Why didn't you think of them?

MARY. Why, you mustn't leave me. I couldn't bear it—you'd be unhappy too—who'd take care of you. I've apologized—I was wrong. I'll say it over and over again. I'm sorry. Oh, so sorry. I'll endure my punishment rather than that. I don't want the money—or the house—or anything—I don't ask you to care for me—only—don't leave me. (*She throws her arms about his neck*) No. No. Not that. You mustn't. You shan't. I'm your wife, Lew. Your wife——

LEWIS. It's no use Mary.

MARY. It's cruel—and I don't deserve it—Oh, you're making me so miserable—so unhappy. (*She follows him pleading—weeping—inarticulate*) Lew—for God's sake don't leave me—I love you—You're breaking my heart—(*He releases himself and goes out*) Lew—Lew—(*The door closes*) MARY reels into a chair) He's gone. He's gone.

CURTAIN.

ACT III.

The Third Act takes place at Locust Hill, the home of Mrs. Alden, on Long Island, in June of the next year.

On the Right is a pretty stucco cottage—two stories high. There is a little porch, with a step leading to it—which runs in a curve: The roof is supported by two pillars. The main entrance to the house opens off this porch and runs straight up and down the stage. A large French window also opens on the porch from a portion of the house, running across the stage. There is also a large window to the left of the porch. There are four upstairs windows; on each of these there is a window box of flowers. On the left of the stage running straight up and down is the main road. A high, well-trimmed hedge separates this road from the lawn. There is a gate hung between two large white posts. There is a locust tree in the Centre of the stage, in full bloom. A curved bench is placed about the foot of it. There are three locust trees outside the hedge in a line, up and down stage. All in full bloom. A hedge runs across the stage from right to left at back. A stile in the Centre of this gives access to the chicken run and as this rises as it reaches the back of the stage, the chickens can be plainly seen. In the foreground, at back, are chicken houses, and runs, enclosed in wire fence. In the background is a Long Island Country side. Such of the furnishings of the house, as can be seen, indicate a plain but comfortable home.

ACT III.

SCENE:—*When the curtain rises, MILDRED is discovered feeding chickens.*

MILDRED. (*Calling*) Chick, Chick, Chickee, Chickee.

RHODA. (*Off*) Get out o' heah. Go on. (*She appears driving a chicken out of the house*) De parlor ain't no place for a chicken. She—(*Sees MILDRED*) Lawsee. Is you feedin' dem chickens agin?

MILDRED. They're hungry.

RHODA. You can't fill up a chicken nohow—Day's wuss'n boarders. First thing you know dey gwine to have de gout, or de pip, or whatever it is—dey gits.

MILDRED. (*Showing pan to chickens*) Empty. All gone.

RHODA. Ef dey ain't had enough let 'em go an' eat bugs. Whut time you 'low Miss Mary be home from de poultry show.

MILDRED. She'll be here in time for dinner.

RHODA. I hope so. I didn't sleep a wink last night, I was so skeered. Every time a chicken snored I thought it was a burglar. I hate to do it, but I gwine to leave you; I'm gwine to tell Mis' Mary when she gets home.

MILDRED. Why, Rhoda, we can't get on without you.

RHODA. I wouldn't keer if dey wuz a man on de place at night. But jest three women all by ourselves—um—um. De country ain't no place fo' a nervous woman.

MILDRED. Oh, you mustn't leave us, Rhoda—

Talk it over with Mary; she'll be here now—very soon. (*Looking at watch*) Mr. Hazleton is going to bring her over from the station in his car.

RHODA. Mr. Hazleton been mighty convenient with dat car, ain't he? Jess seems like he has business somewhere round dat depo' every night when yo'all git home.

MILDRED. (*A trifle dignified*) Mr. Hazleton's firm is promoting Grasslands Improvements. It's only five miles from here. It's perfectly natural that he should have business—or—or come see his old friends——

RHODA. Yassum. It's nachel enough. (*Carelessly*) And I reckon he got plenty o' time to spare. Grasslands don't 'mount to much.

MILDRED. (*Indignantly*) Why, Rhoda, Grasslands is over half sold. It's doing splendidly. And it's all Mr. Hazleton's work. He's one of the best real estate men on the Island. He's making lots of money and he's saving it.

(RHODA slyly chuckles. *The noise of a car is heard off, left.* MILDRED goes to gate, and looks out. *Waves her handkerchief.*)

RHODA. Is dat Mis' Mary?

MILDRED. Yes. She's coming. (*Calling*) Hello, Mary. Hello, Tommy. (*The car stops in front of gate*) So glad you've come, dear.

TOMMY. (*Off*) Thank you. (RHODA chuckles)

MILDRED. Oh, I wasn't talking to you. You silly thing.

(MARY comes through gate carrying a pretty game cock.)

MARY. How are you, dear—Is everything all right, Rhoda?

RHODA. Yassum.

MILDRED. I hope you're not tired.

MARY. Not a bit—Had a lovely day.

(TOMMY HAZLETON *comes through gate.*)

TOMMY. Hello.

MILDRED. Hello.

MARY. Well, Rhoda—do you see that? (*She points to blue ribbon on the game cock*)

RHODA. What y'all got William Henry dressed up fo' like dat?

MARY. William Henry—your own pride and joy, won a blue ribbon.

RHODA. (*Pleased*) Lawsee, you don't mean it. (*Takes game cock*) Chile—I'm proud of you. Mammy's pet. (*To MARY*) Did he lick all dem other chickens?

MARY. Why, Rhoda, they didn't let him fight.

RHODA. Den how come dey know he's de best chicken?

MARY. They judge them on points.

RHODA. Yassum, but fightin' is dis chicken's strong point.

MARY. Any more little ones to-day? (*She goes to porch and takes off dust coat and veil*)

RHODA. Yassum. Four broods an' about four hundred orphans.

TOMMY. Orphans?

RHODA. De kind dey hatches in dat incubaker.

MILDRED. (*Laughing*) Rhoda has a grudge against the incubator.

RHODA. Yassum. Dat's no way to disappoint a hen. No wonder dey hides off in a corner an' sets on a bunch o' door knobs. (*RHODA goes out with the game cock*)

MARY. Put away the car, Mr. Hazleton, and have supper with us.

MILDRED. Yes, Tommy, do.

TOMMY. Will you go for a ride, after supper?

MILDRED. If you like.

(TOMMY smiles at MILDRED and starts out of gate.)

MARY. Oh, Mr. Hazleton, will you please bring my bag.

TOMMY. Oh, of course. Excuse me. I overlooked it. (*He goes out*)

MILDRED. Well, how was the poultry show?

MARY. Lovely. They had some of the dearest birds—I made friends with the finest Turkey.

MILDRED. See anyone you know—any old friends I mean.

MARY. I happened to meet Mrs. Sam Ames. She asked me where we were living. She doesn't know—that Lew, and I—(*Hesitates*)

MILDRED. No, of course not. It's a wonder Mrs. Beecher didn't tell every one in town.

MARY. Thank Heaven, Mrs. Beecher doesn't know any of our friends——

MILDRED. And I don't suppose she has any of her own. While you were in town—This came for you. (*She takes a letter from the bosom of her dress, and gives it to MARY, who takes it from her, and looks at it, then crumples it in her hand, unopened*) Aren't you going to read it?

MARY. No.

MILDRED. It might be important—You might want to answer it. (*MARY shakes her head*) Mary, do you think things will always be like this. Aren't you ever going to forgive him?

MARY. Why should I?

MILDRED. Why—because he's such a baby—All men are like that. Lew is a little more peppery than most men, but he can't help his temper. He flared up—Now, he's sorry. He was sorry the next day.

MARY. Lew went away—he—left me—I waited. I gave him his chance—Now—it is too late——

MILDRED. Oh, don't say that—it will mean such unhappiness——

MARY. Why should you care, if Lew is unhappy——

MILDRED. I was thinking of you Mary—you're unhappy—You miss him—I know you do.

MARY. Yes—I miss Lew—(*She turns away.*
RHODA *appears on porch*)

RHODA. Mis' Mary, is Mr. Hazleton gwine to stay to supper?

MARY. Yes—Rhoda.

RHODA. (*Disgusted*) Nothin' but baked beans, an' fo' miles from a sto'.

(*Enter TOMMY R. cheerfully swinging bag.*)

MARY. Why don't you kill a chicken?

RHODA. Every time he comes out here I kill a chicken—if I feed him any *more* chicken he'll begin to flap his wings and cackle.

TOMMY. Here's your bag, Mrs. Alden.

MARY. Oh—careful, please—There's a dozen eggs in there—and they cost me a dollar a piece——

TOMMY. What are they, ostrich eggs?

MILDRED. I'm going to get some of the little chickens to show Tommy. (*MILDRED runs out*)

TOMMY. Rhoda, I'll turn this over to you. (*Gives her bag*)

RHODA. Yes, suh. Ef you want to wash yo' hands—befo' supper, everything is ready in de guest chamber. I hope y'all ain't very hungry. We got beans fo' supper.

TOMMY. (*Joking manner*) Nothing could be better. See that my bean is well done and baked on both sides. (*He laughs at RHODA and goes in*)

RHODA. He sho' is de most comical gentleman—always jokin'——

MARY. (*Beneath tree*) Aren't the locust trees lovely? All full of bloom——

RHODA. Yassum. An' all full o' bees——

MARY. I'm afraid you don't like the country, Rhoda.

RHODA. Who—me? No, suh. I can't stand it, Mis' Mary, I'm goin' to beat it back to town.

MARY. Oh, it's ever so much nicer out here. It's clean—and sweet—and quiet.

RHODA. De quiet is gettin' on my nerves. Dey's never no excitement, like a fire, or a fight. I sho' do love sompin' doin'. At home, I could put my haid outen de window an' hear de elevated—Sometimes I git so hongry, fo' jest one smell, o' de subway, um—um.

MARY. Oh, I'm so sorry you don't like it here. I hoped you would—I love it—and I'm happy——

RHODA. 'Deed you ain't.

MARY. Rhoda.

RHODA. No, *suh*. Yo' certainly am spirited—You ain't never let on—not a word—You's de spunkiest lady ever I see. But you an' me is a couple o' near widows—an' we ain't happy.

MARY. And *you're* going to *leave* me?

RHODA. Lawd knows I hates to go, but I can't stand it, out here. (*She begins to snivel softly*) I'll stay till de end o' de month.

(*Enter MILDRED from behind house. She carries a couple of tiny yellow chicks.*)

MILDRED. Now don't be afraid—nobody's going to hurt you and pretty soon you'll be back under mother's wing.

RHODA. Dat incumbaker ain't got no wings. (*She goes into house R., takes bag, veil, coat, pan*)

MILDRED. Where's Tommy?

MARY. Upstairs.

MILDRED. (*Calling*) Tommy—Tommy—I've got something to show you.

TOMMY. (*Off*) What is it.

MILDRED. Hurry down.

MARY. (*Looks at chicks*) Handling is bad for the little chicks.

MILDRED. Oh, is it? As soon as Tommy sees them, I'll put them back.

(TOM HAZLETON *comes from house and joins them.*
She shows him baby chicks.)

TOMMY. What is it—a powder puff?

MILDRED. Baby chicks. Aren't they pretty. I love 'em when they're like this.

TOMMY. (*Strokes one*) Nice fur.

MARY. (*Takes them*) It will soon be time for all good little chicks to go beddy bye. (*To TOMMY and MILDRED*) Don't go rambling off and be late for supper. (*She quietly goes out whispering to chicks. TOMMY stands by gate looking out*)

MILDRED. Have a Rose. (*She puts it in his buttonhole*)

TOMMY. The decorative effect must be very pleasing.

MILDRED. (*Fastening it in buttonhole. Winces*) Oh!

TOMMY. Pin?

MILDRED. (*Shows her finger*) Thorn. (*He looks at finger—kisses it*) Now, Tommy—No—"sentiment."

TOMMY. (*Resumes merely friendly attitude*) No sentiment.

MILDRED. (*Cautions him*) Remember our agreement——

TOMMY. (*Lightly*) Be it known to all men by these presents—That the party of the first part, and the party of the second part agree to disagree—regarding the state of matrimony.

MILDRED. Now, Tommy, what's the use of going all over that again. On certain subjects we think differently. Oh, I know you can't see my point of view——

TOMMY. I can *see* it, but I don't *like* it—"Marriage—is business."

MILDRED. I don't like you to say such things to me. And I don't like you to *think* them.—Do you remember—a year ago—you told me Mary and her husband—were a happy couple.

TOMMY. Well—they *were* happy——

MILDRED. *She* wasn't——

TOM. Lew thought the world of her——

MILDRED. And she thought the world of him. Well—just one thing went wrong. See the result—They haven't seen each other for a year. They will very likely never see each other again.

TOMMY. I wonder. (*He glances toward the gate*)

MILDRED. Oh, no. He doesn't care any more. (*TOMMY smiles to himself*) And I don't think she cares about him——

TOMMY. She's not happy——

MILDRED. No. I suppose it takes time to get over a blow such as she had—But she's—independent—She's done splendidly. She's succeeded.

TOMMY. Don't forget, you helped.

MILDRED. Yes. For a year all my spare money has gone in the business. I'll share the profit—And it's beginning to come in—It's nice—having a share in a business——

TOMMY. Yes. I've been thinking—of—forming a "partnership." (*He looks at her in a longing way—which she does not notice*)

MILDRED. Real estate?

TOMMY. No. Not real estate.

MILDRED. Oh, then you'll give up real estate.

TOMMY. Not at all. This will be a venture in—(*He looks slyly at her*) another direction. (*He gives her a look which she does not notice*)

MILDRED. But, Tommy, you're so busy—Will you have time to attend to it?

TOMMY. Oh, it won't take all my time—and I'll leave a good deal of it to my partner.

MILDRED. Oh, your—partner understands the business.

TOMMY. (*Again casting a sly glance at her*) Apparently, much better than I do.

MILDRED. Who is it——?

TOMMY. You.

MILDRED. Now Tommy——

TOMMY. Wait. This isn't a proposal. It's a business proposition. First of all, suppose we go in a partnership—for life. Of course, you would have to leave the firm you're with—but anyone in business—does that—when they try something new. The income of the new firm—is their joint property—and the party of the first part, and the party of the second part both have access, to the books. The parties hereto shall agree on a certain sum, for the support and maintenance, of their joint establishment, to wit:—a home—the remainder of the afore-said income shall be divided equally between the two parties hereto to have and to hold—to blow or to save—without let or hindrance——

MILDRED. Oh, stop, stop. (*He hesitates*) Tommy, that's dear of you. I've been waiting to hear you say something like that, for a long time.

TOMMY. Hooray, I've said the right thing at last.

MILDRED. (*With feeling*) Oh, it isn't that I'm selfish—or mercenary—or don't trust you—but when I see the wreck and misery of people's lives—simply because they haven't had a clear sensible understanding.

TOMMY. (*Sincerely*) We'll have no wreck, little girl—And when shall the new firm—incorporate?

MILDRED. Oh, not for ever so long—I can't leave Mary. She needs me—She needs my help—She'd be alone——

TOMMY. It might happen that your sister—and her husband——

MILDRED. It won't happen——

TOMMY. But if it should.

MILDRED. Why of course, if Mary had someone to look after her, and help her. (TOMMY *smiles happily*) What are you smiling about——

TOMMY. That's a promise? If—Lew and your sister——

MILDRED. I suppose so.

TOMMY. And now that the—business end is settled—I want to make a few remarks about your eyes, and your hair——

MILDRED. (*Sweetly*) I don't mind. (ALDEN *comes in from the road, and stands slightly outside the gate. He looks older—and tired. MILDRED sees him*) Why, it's Lew—Mr. Alden.

ALDEN. No—Lew—please.

MILDRED. Won't you—come in? (LEWIS *opens gate and comes in*) How are you. (MILDRED *advancing toward him, constrained. They shake hands. To TOMMY*) You *knew*.

TOMMY. Yes.

MILDRED. Why didn't you tell me?

TOMMY. I wanted to get that promise, and I got it.

ALDEN. Do you think Mary will see me?

MILDRED. Oh, I *hope* so. (TOMMY *smiles cheerfully*) But—well—I'm afraid. I'm sorry to say it—but I'm afraid—You see, Lew—you waited so long——

LEWIS. I know.

MILDRED. She doesn't expect you.

LEWIS. No, I have written several letters recently. She answered—once.

MILDRED. She didn't tell me——

LEWIS. Like you—I'm very much afraid—that I waited too long.

TOMMY. (*To MILDRED*) Suppose you find her——

MILDRED. What shall I say?

TOMMY. Oh, just ask her to come here.

MILDRED. Must I tell her Lew has come?

ALDEN. No. She might not see me.

TOMMY. Say I want to talk to her—about the mortgage—or something like that. Any excuse will do——

MILDRED. I understand—I will—(*Going*)—and I do hope she'll forgive him—not only for his sake—but for her own.

TOMMY. And—ours——?

MILDRED. And ours—(*MILDRED goes out*)

LEWIS. What a beautiful place——

TOMMY. Isn't it?

LEWIS. You—found it—didn't you?

TOMMY. Yes—And she's doing very well. She has Rhoda, and a boy to help her. She's beginning to get some money.

LEWIS. She said she could—I didn't believe it—I was a fool——

TOMMY. Mrs. Alden has never discussed the matter with me—so I have a very vague idea of your trouble. I know it was something about money.

LEWIS. It was *all* about money. We're both to blame. At first I couldn't see my share—but I see it now—and that's what makes me feel so cheap—My mistake came first—My boy—let me give you a piece of advice—When you marry—even if you're only making ten dollars a week—give your wife her end of it—and forget it.

TOMMY. Of course. It's coming to her. I've thought a lot about that—Of course if a man married a woman like Mrs. Beecher——

LEWIS. *She* might have done *better*—if Beecher had started right——

TOMMY. You know I don't think it's wise for two people to marry until they've agreed on some way to share their income, so the wife won't be dependent.

LEWIS. That's it. You're on the right track——

stick to it. I wish I had understood. Mary—is everything in the world to me—There never was any other woman—I want her to come back to me. I'd pay off the mortgage—She could go on with her chickens—if she likes—I'd give anything—do anything—if she'd only forgive me. (*Thoughtfully*) Will she?—Will she?—

TOMMY. I don't know.

LEWIS. I don't know how to speak to her—I don't know what to say—I'm apt to make a fool of myself—Will you see her first—tell her I'm here—Ask her to let me speak to her—That's all—just see her and talk to her.

TOMMY. Why, of course. I'll do anything I can—(*MARY'S voice is heard out, left*) Suppose you just step outside a moment—(*Takes him to gate*) If you stand there—you can hear all that's said and you'll be out of sight—Cheer up.

(*LEWIS goes out of gate. TOMMY looks after him—thoughtfully. MARY comes above, from house R.*)

MARY. Mildred says you want to talk to me, Mr. Hazleton?

TOMMY. Yes. I want to say something to you—it's rather important.

MARY. Is it about you—and Mildred.

TOMMY. No. It's about you and—

MARY. Oh—don't—

TOMMY. I must—

MARY. Please.

TOMMY. Don't think I'm curious—don't think I mean to pry into your personal affairs—I have a—sort of—message—

MARY. From—Mr. Alden.

TOMMY. From Lew—yes—He wants to see you—

MARY. (*Shakes her head gravely*) No.

TOMMY. He wants to talk to you—to tell you——

MARY. He has left things rest as they are—for a year—We will let them rest as they are, for all the years.

TOMMY. He wants to come out here, and see you.

MARY. No. He must not come.

TOMMY. He—*has* come.

MARY. He is—*here*? (TOMMY *nods*. MARY *stands, silent, for some time*) I do not want to see him. He wrote me. I told him I did not want to see him—Please—tell him—to go.

(ALDEN *steps in at the gate. His face is set.*)

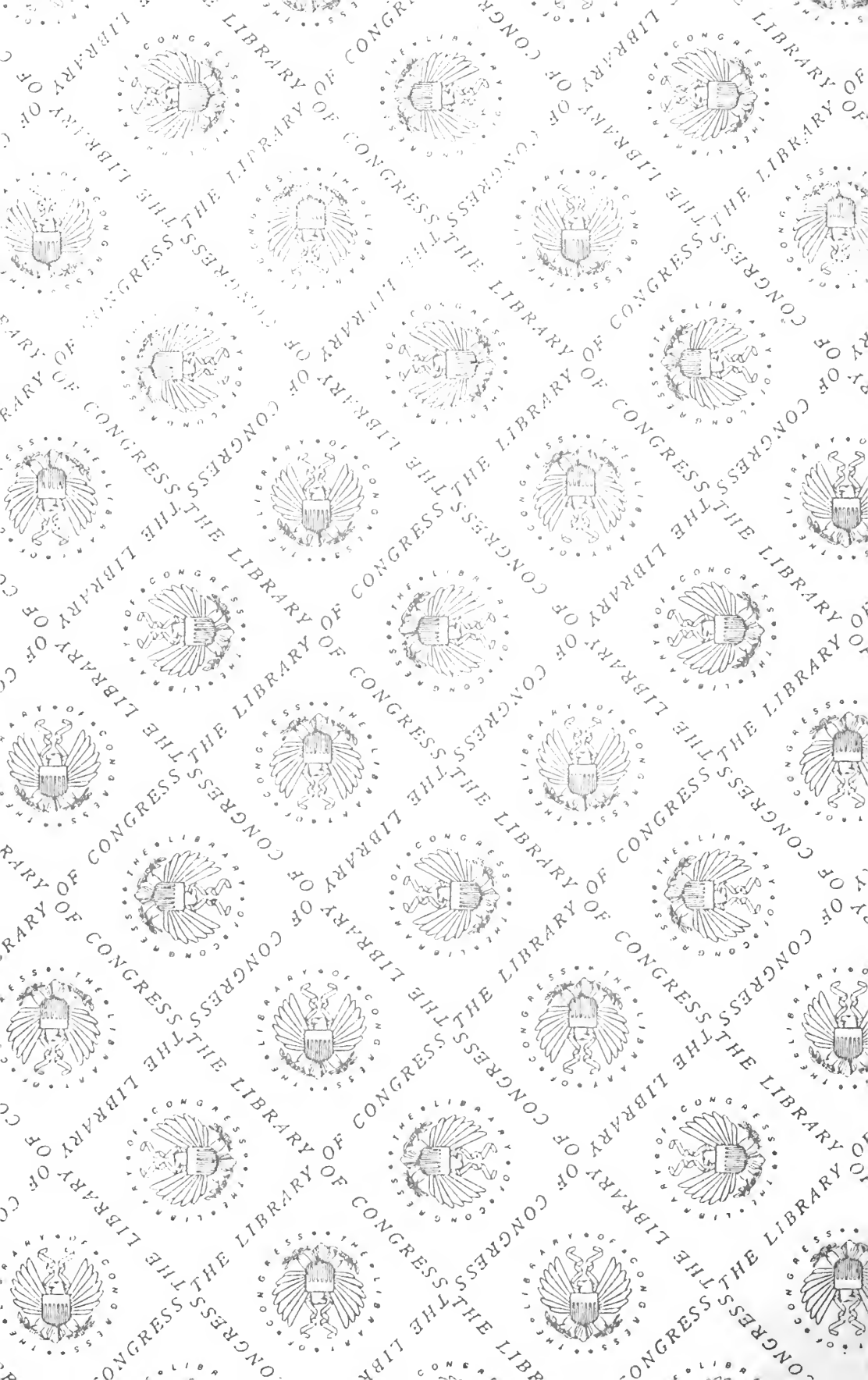
ALDEN. Mary—(*She turns toward him*) I know you feel bitter and I don't blame you. But I wish you'd hear me. I was hurt—I didn't understand. It was a rotten thing to do, but it didn't seem so at the time. But when the hurt died away, I began to think of the many things you had said. I tried to get your point of view, and I have. We've nearly made a wreck of our lives. In the very beginning the fault was mine. Is it too late to try and make things right. Won't you? Won't you? (*A pause*) I'm sorry—(*She only looks at him—he gazes at her. Then very slowly he walks from the porch across to the gate—and goes out. As he passes, MARY'S face shows all that is passing in her mind*)

MARY. Lew—(*She goes to gate*) Lew—(*She goes out*)

(TOMMY *comes to gate and looks off after them.*

MILDRED *slips on and comes to him. Both watch with anxious faces. Then their expression changes to relief—then to joy. TOM turns to MILDRED and holds out his arms. She shyly looks up in his face and goes to him.*)

CURTAIN.





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